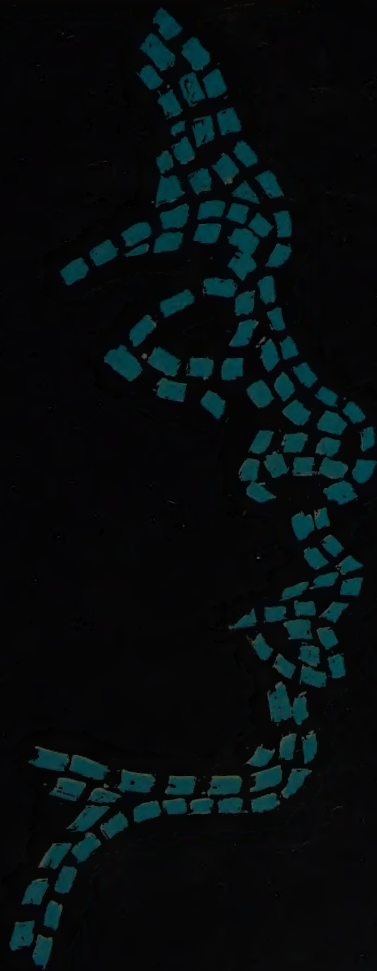


The Complete Poems of  
**PAUL  
LAURENCE  
DUNBAR**



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THE  
COMPLETE POEMS  
OF  
PAUL LAURENCE  
DUNBAR

WITH THE INTRODUCTION TO  
"LYRICS OF LOWLY LIFE"  
BY W. D. HOWELLS

**COMMITTEE FOR  
TECHNICAL EDUCATION**

DODD, MEAD & COMPANY  
NEW YORK

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PRINTED IN U. S. A.

## DEDICATIONS

*LYRICS OF LOWLY LIFE*

TO

MY MOTHER

• • •

*LYRICS OF THE HEARTH-SIDE*

TO

ALICE

• • •

*LYRICS OF LOVE AND LAUGHTER*

TO

MISS CATHERINE IMPEY

• • •

*LYRICS OF SUNSHINE AND SHADOW*

TO

MRS. FRANK CONOVER

WITH THANKS FOR HER LONG BELIEF



## INTRODUCTION TO LYRICS OF LOWLY LIFE

I THINK I should scarcely trouble the reader with a special appeal in behalf of this book, if it had not specially appealed to me for reasons apart from the author's race, origin, and condition. The world is too old now, and I find myself too much of its mood, to care for the work of a poet because he is black, because his father and mother were slaves, because he was, before and after he began to write poems, an elevator-boy. These facts would certainly attract me to him as a man, if I knew him to have a literary ambition, but when it came to his literary art, I must judge it irrespective of these facts, and enjoy or endure it for what it was in itself.

It seems to me that this was my experience with the poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar when I found it in another form, and in justice to him I cannot wish that it should be otherwise with his readers here. Still, it will legitimately interest those who like to know the causes, or, if these may not be known, the sources, of things, to learn that the father and mother of the first poet of his race in our language were negroes without admixture of white

blood. The father escaped from slavery in Kentucky to freedom in Canada, while there was still no hope of freedom otherwise; but the mother was freed by the events of the civil war, and came North to Ohio, where their son was born at Dayton, and grew up with such chances and mischances for mental training as everywhere befall the children of the poor. He has told me that his father picked up the trade of a plasterer, and when he had taught himself to read, loved chiefly to read history. The boy's mother shared his passion for literature, with a special love of poetry, and after the father died she struggled on in more than the poverty she had shared with him. She could value the faculty which her son showed first in prose sketches and attempts at fiction, and she was proud of the praise and kindness they won him among the people of the town, where he has never been without the warmest and kindest friends.

In fact from every part of Ohio and from several cities of the adjoining States, there came letters in cordial appreciation of the critical recognition which it was my



## INTRODUCTION

pleasure no less than my duty to offer Paul Dunbar's work in another place. It seemed to me a happy omen for him that so many people who had known him, or known of him, were glad of a stranger's good word; and it was gratifying to see that at home he was esteemed for the things he had done rather than because as the son of negro slaves he had done them. If a prophet is often without honor in his own country, it surely is nothing against him when he has it. In this case it deprived me of the glory of a discoverer; but that is sometimes a barren joy, and I am always willing to forego it.

What struck me in reading Mr. Dunbar's poetry was what had already struck his friends in Ohio and Indiana, in Kentucky and Illinois. They had felt, as I felt, that however gifted his race had proven itself in music, in oratory, in several of the other arts, here was the first instance of an American negro who had evinced innate distinction in literature. In my criticism of his book I had alleged Dumas in France, and I had forgetfully failed to allege the far greater Pushkin in Russia; but these were both mulattoes, who might have been supposed to derive their qualities from white blood

vastly more artistic than ours, and who were the creatures of an environment more favorable to their literary development. So far as I could remember, Paul Dunbar was the only man of pure African blood and of American civilization to feel the negro life æsthetically and express it lyrically. It seemed to me that this had come to its most modern consciousness in him, and that his brilliant and unique achievement was to have studied the American negro objectively, and to have represented him as he found him to be, with humor, with sympathy, and yet with what the reader must instinctively feel to be entire truthfulness. I said that a race which had come to this effect in any member of it, had attained civilization in him, and I permitted myself the imaginative prophecy that the hostilities and the prejudices which had so long constrained his race were destined to vanish in the arts that these were to be the final proof that God had made of one blood all nations of men. I thought his merits positive and not comparative; and I held that if his black poems had been written by a white man, I should not have found them less admirable. I accepted them as an evidence of the essential unity of the human race, which does not

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think or feel black in one and white in another, but humanly in all.

Yet it appeared to me then, and it appears to me now, that there is a precious difference of temperament between the races which it would be a great pity ever to lose, and that this is best preserved and most charmingly suggested by Mr. Dunbar in those pieces of his where he studies the moods and traits of his race in its own accent of our English. We call such pieces dialect pieces for want of some closer phrase, but they are really not dialect so much as delightful personal attempts and failures for the written and spoken language. In nothing is his essentially refined and delicate art so well shown as in these pieces, which, as I ventured to say, described the range between appetite and emotion, with certain lifts far beyond and above it, which is the range of the race. He reveals in these a finely ironical perception of the negro's limitations, with a tenderness for them which I think so very rare as to be almost quite new. I should say, perhaps, that it was this humorous quality which Mr. Dunbar had added to our literature, and it would be this which would most distinguish him, now and hereafter. It is something that one

feels in nearly all the dialect pieces; and I hope that in the present collection he has kept all of these in his earlier volume, and added others to them. But the contents of this book are wholly of his own choosing, and I do not know how much or little he may have preferred the poems in literary English. Some of these I thought very good, and even more than very good, but not distinctively his contribution to the body of American poetry. What I mean is that several people might have written them; but I do not know any one else at present who could quite have written the dialect pieces. These are divinations and reports of what passes in the hearts and minds of a lowly people whose poetry had hitherto been inarticulately expressed in music, but now finds, for the first time in our tongue, literary interpretation of a very artistic completeness.

I say the event is interesting, but how important it shall be can be determined only by Mr. Dunbar's future performance. I cannot undertake to prophesy concerning this; but if he should do nothing more than he has done, I should feel that he had made the strongest claim for the negro in English literature that the negro has yet made. He has at least

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produced something that, however we may critically disagree about it, we cannot well refuse to enjoy; in more than one piece he has produced a work of art.

W. D. HOWELLS



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**LYRICS OF LOWLY LIFE**





ERE SLEEP COMES DOWN  
TO SOOTHE THE  
WEARY EYES

ERE sleep comes down to soothe  
the weary eyes,

Which all the day with cease-  
less care have sought

The magic gold which from the  
seeker flies;

Ere dreams put on the gown  
and cap of thought,

And make the waking world a  
world of lies,—

Of lies most palpable, uncouth,  
forlorn,

That say life's full of aches and  
tears and sighs,—

Oh, how with more than dreams  
the soul is torn,

Ere sleep comes down to soothe the  
weary eyes.

Ere sleep comes down to soothe the  
weary eyes,

How all the griefs and heart-  
aches we have known

Come up like pois'nous vapors that  
arise

From some base witch's caldron,  
when the crone,

To work some potent spell, her  
magic plies.

The past which held its share of  
bitter pain,

Whose ghost we prayed that Time  
might exorcise,

Comes up, is lived and suffered  
o'er again,

Ere sleep comes down to soothe the  
weary eyes.

Ere sleep comes down to soothe the  
weary eyes,

What phantoms fill the dimly  
lighted room;

What ghostly shades in awe-creat-  
ing guise

Are bodied forth within the  
teeming gloom.

What echoes faint of sad and soul-  
sick cries,

And pangs of vague inexplicable  
pain

That pay the spirit's ceaseless en-  
terprise,

Come thronging through the  
chambers of the brain,

Ere sleep comes down to soothe the  
weary eyes.

Ere sleep comes down to soothe the  
weary eyes,

Where ranges forth the spirit  
far and free?

Through what strange realms and  
unfamiliar skies

Tends her far course to lands of  
mystery?

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

To lands unspeakable — beyond  
    surmise,  
Where shapes unknowable to  
    being spring,  
Till, faint of wing, the Fancy fails  
    and dies  
Much wearied with the spirit's  
    journeying,  
Ere sleep comes down to soothe the  
    weary eyes.

Ere sleep comes down to soothe the  
    weary eyes,  
How questioneth the soul that  
    other soul,—  
The inner sense which neither  
    cheats nor lies,  
But self exposes unto self, a  
    scroll  
Full writ with all life's acts un-  
    wise or wise,  
In characters indelible and  
    known;  
So, trembling with the shock of  
    sad surprise,  
The soul doth view its awful  
    self alone,  
Ere sleep comes down to soothe  
    the weary eyes.

When sleep comes down to seal the  
    weary eyes,  
The last dear sleep whose soft  
    embrace is balm,  
And whom sad sorrow teaches us  
    to prize  
For kissing all our passions into  
    calm,

Ah, then, no more we heed the sad  
    world's cries,  
Or seek to probe th' eternal mys-  
    tery,  
Or fret our souls at long-withheld  
    replies,  
At glooms through which our  
    visions cannot see,  
When sleep comes down to seal the  
    weary eyes.

### THE POET AND HIS SONG

A SONG is but a little thing,  
And yet what joy it is to sing!  
In hours of toil it gives me zest,  
And when at eve I long for rest;  
When cows come home along the  
    bars,  
And in the fold I hear the bell,  
As Night, the shepherd, herds his  
    stars,  
I sing my song, and all is well.

There are no ears to hear my lays,  
No lips to lift a word of praise;  
But still, with faith unfaltering,  
I live and laugh and love and sing.  
What matters yon unheeding  
    throng?

They cannot feel my spirit's  
    spell,  
Since life is sweet and love is long,  
I sing my song, and all is well.

My days are never days of ease;  
I till my ground and prune my  
    trees.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

When ripened gold is all the plain,  
I put my sickle to the grain.

I labor hard, and toil and sweat,  
While others dream within the dell;

But even while my brow is wet,  
I sing my song, and all is well.

Sometimes the sun, unkindly hot,  
My garden makes a desert spot;  
Sometimes a blight upon the tree  
Takes all my fruit away from me;  
And then with throes of bitter pain

Rebellious passions rise and  
swell;

But — life is more than fruit or  
grain,

And so I sing, and all is well.

### RETORT

"THOU art a fool," said my head  
to my heart,

"Indeed, the greatest of fools thou  
art,

To be led astray by the trick of  
a tress,

By a smiling face or a ribbon  
smart;"

And my heart was in sore dis-  
tress.

Then Phyllis came by, and her face  
was fair,

The light gleamed soft on her  
raven hair;

And her lips were blooming a  
rosy red.

Then my heart spoke out with a  
right bold air:

"Thou art worse than a fool, O  
head!"

### ACCOUNTABILITY

FOLKS ain't got no right to cen-  
suah othah folks about dey  
habits;

Him dat giv' de squir'ls de bush-  
tails made de bobtails fu' de  
rabbits.

Him dat built de gread big moun-  
tains hollered out de little  
valleys,

Him dat made de streets an' drive-  
ways wasn't shamed to make  
de alleys.

We is all constructed diff'ent,  
d'ain't no two of us de same;

We cain't he'p ouah likes an' dis-  
likes, ef we'se bad we ain't to  
blame.

Ef we'se good, we need n't show  
off, case you bet it ain't ouah  
doin'

We gits into su'ttain channels dat  
we jes' cain't he'p pu'suin'.

But we all fits into places dat no  
othah ones could fill,

An' we does the things we has to,  
big er little, good er ill.

John cain't tek de place o' Henry,  
Su an' Sally ain't alike;

Bass ain't nuthin' like a suckah,  
chub ain't nuthin' like a pike.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

When you come to think about it,  
how it's all planned out it's  
splendid.

Nuthin's done er evah happens,  
'dout hit's somefin' dat's intended;

Don't keer whut you does, you has  
to, an' hit sholy beats de  
dickens,—

Viney, go put on de kittle, I got  
one o' mastah's chickens.

### FREDERICK DOUGLASS

A HUSH is over all the teeming  
lists,

And there is pause, a breath-  
space in the strife;

A spirit brave has passed beyond  
the mists

And vapors that obscure the sun  
of life.

And Ethiopia, with bosom torn,  
Laments the passing of her no-  
blest born.

She weeps for him a mother's  
burning tears—

She loved him with a mother's  
deepest love.

He was her champion thro' direful  
years,

And held her weal all other ends  
above.

When Bondage held her bleeding  
in the dust,

He raised her up and whispered,  
“Hope and Trust.”

For her his voice, a fearless clarion  
rung

That broke in warning on the  
ears of men;

For her the strong bow of his  
power he strung,

And sent his arrows to the very  
den

Where grim Oppression held his  
bloody place

And gloated o'er the mis'ries of a  
race.

And he was no soft-tongued apolo-  
gist;

He spoke straightforward, fear-  
lessly uncowed;

The sunlight of his truth dispelled  
the mist,

And set in bold relief each dark  
hued cloud;

To sin and crime he gave their  
proper hue,

And hurled at evil what was evil's  
due.

Through good and ill report he  
cleaved his way

Right onward, with his face set  
toward the heights,

Nor feared to face the foeman's  
dread array,—

The lash of scorn, the sting of  
petty spites.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

He dared the lightning in the  
lightning's track,  
And answered thunder with his  
thunder back.

When men maligned him, and  
their torrent wrath

In furious imprecations o'er him  
broke,

He kept his counsel as he kept his  
path;

'T was for his race, not for him-  
self he spoke.

He knew the import of his Mas-  
ter's call,

And felt himself too mighty to be  
small.

No miser in the good he held was  
he,—

His kindness followed his hori-  
zon's rim.

His heart, his talents, and his  
hands were free

To all who truly needed aught  
of him.

Where poverty and ignorance  
were rife,

He gave his bounty as he gave his  
life.

The place and cause that first  
aroused his might

Still proved its power until his  
latest day.

In Freedom's lists and for the aid  
of Right

Still in the foremost rank he  
waged the fray;

Wrong lived; his occupation was  
not gone.

He died in action with his armor  
on!

We weep for him, but we have  
touched his hand,

And felt the magic of his pres-  
ence nigh,

The current that he sent through-  
out the land,

The kindling spirit of his battle-  
cry.

O'er all that holds us we shall tri-  
umph yet,

And place our banner where his  
hopes were set!

Oh, Douglass, thou hast passed  
beyond the shore,

But still thy voice is ringing o'er  
the gale!

Thou 'st taught thy race how high  
her hopes may soar,

And bade her seek the heights,  
nor faint, nor fail.

She will not fail, she heeds thy  
stirring cry,

She knows thy guardian spirit will  
be nigh,

And, rising from beneath the  
chast'ning rod,

She stretches out her bleeding  
hands to God!

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

## LIFE

A CRUST of bread and a corner to  
sleep in,  
A minute to smile and an hour to  
weep in,  
A pint of joy to a peck of trouble,  
And never a laugh but the moans  
come double;  
And that is life!

A crust and a corner that love  
makes precious,  
With a smile to warm and the  
tears to refresh us;  
And joy seems sweeter when cares  
come after,  
And a moan is the finest of foils  
for laughter;  
And that is life!

## THE LESSON

My cot was down by a cypress  
grove,  
And I sat by my window the  
whole night long,  
And heard well up from the deep  
dark wood  
A mocking-bird's passionate  
song.  
And I thought of myself so sad  
and lone,  
And my life's cold winter that  
knew no spring;  
Of my mind so weary and sick and  
wild,  
Of my heart too sad to sing.

But e'en as I listened the mocking-  
bird's song,  
A thought stole into my sad  
dened heart,  
And I said, "I can cheer some  
other soul  
By a carol's simple art."

For oft from the darkness  
hearts and lives  
Come songs that brim with joy  
and light,  
As out of the gloom of the cypress  
grove  
The mocking-bird sings  
night.

So I sang a lay for a brother's e-  
In a strain to soothe his bleas-  
ing heart,  
And he smiled at the sound of my  
voice and lyre,  
Though mine was a feeble air.

But at his smile I smiled in turn  
And into my soul there came  
a ray:  
In trying to soothe another's woe  
Mine own had passed away.

## THE RISING OF THE STORM

THE lake's dark breast  
Is all unrest,  
It heaves with a sob and a sigh  
Like a tremulous bird,  
From its slumber stirred,  
The moon is a-tilt in the sky.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

From the silent deep  
The waters sweep,  
But faint on the cold white stones,  
And the wavelets fly  
With a plaintive cry  
O'er the old earth's bare, bleak  
bones.

And the spray upsprings  
On its ghost-white wings,  
And tosses a kiss at the stars;  
While a water-sprite,  
In sea-pearls dight,  
Hums a sea-hymn's solemn bars.

Far out in the night,  
On the wavering sight  
see a dark hull loom;  
And its light on high,  
Like a Cyclops' eye,  
Shines out through the mist and  
gloom.

Now the winds well up  
From the earth's deep cup,  
And fall on the sea and shore,  
And against the pier  
The waters rear  
And break with a sullen roar.

Up comes the gale,  
And the mist-wrought veil  
Gives way to the lightning's glare,  
And the cloud-drifts fall,  
A sombre pall,  
O'er water, earth, and air.

The storm-king flies,  
His whip he plies,  
And bellows down the wind.  
The lightning rash  
With blinding flash  
Comes pricking on behind.

Rise, waters, rise,  
And taunt the skies  
With your swift-flitting form.  
Sweep, wild winds, sweep,  
And tear the deep  
To atoms in the storm.

And the waters leapt,  
And the wild winds swept,  
And blew out the moon in the sky,  
And I laughed with glee,  
It was joy to me  
As the storm went raging by!

### SUNSET

THE river sleeps beneath the sky,  
And clasps the shadows to its  
breast;  
The, crescent moon shines dim on  
high;  
And in the lately radiant west  
The gold is fading into gray.  
Now stills the lark his festive  
lay,  
And mourns with me the  
dying day.

While in the south the first faint  
star  
Lifts to the night its silver face,



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

And twinkles to the moon afar  
Across the heaven's graying  
space,  
Low murmurs reach me from the  
town,  
As Day puts on her sombre crown,  
And shakes her mantle darkly  
down.

### THE OLD APPLE-TREE

THERE's a memory keeps a-run-  
nin'  
Through my weary head to-  
night,  
An' I see a picture dancin'  
In the fire-flames' ruddy light;  
'Tis the picture of an orchard  
Wrapped in autumn's purple  
haze,  
With the tender light about it  
That I loved in other days.  
An' a-standin' in a corner  
Once again I seem to see  
The verdant leaves an' branches  
Of an old apple-tree.

You perhaps would call it ugly,  
An' I don't know but it's so,  
When you look the tree all over  
Unadorned by memory's glow;  
For its boughs are gnarled an'  
crooked,  
An' its leaves are gettin' thin,  
An' the apples of its bearin'  
Would n't fill so large a bin

As they used to. But I tell you  
When it comes to pleasin' me  
It's the dearest in the orchard,—  
Is that old apple-tree.

I would hide within its shelter,  
Settlin' in some cosy nook,  
Where no calls nor threats could  
stir me

From the pages o' my book.  
Oh, that quiet, sweet seclusion  
In its fulness passeth words!  
It was deeper than the deepest  
That my sanctum now afford  
Why, the jaybirds an' the robin  
They was hand in glove with  
me,

As they winked at me an' warbled  
In that old apple-tree.

It was on its sturdy branches  
That in summers long ago  
I would tie my swing an' dangle  
In contentment to an' fro,  
Idly dreamin' childish fancies,  
Buildin' castles in the air,  
Makin' o' myself a hero  
Of romances rich an' rare.  
I kin shet my eyes an' see it  
Jest as plain as plain kin be,  
That same old swing a-danglin'  
To the old apple-tree.

There's a rustic seat beneath it  
That I never kin forget.  
It's the place where me an'  
Hallie —  
Little sweetheart—used to set,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

When we 'd wander to the orchard  
So's no listenin' ones could hear  
As I whispered sugared nonsense  
Into her little willin' ear.  
Now my gray old wife is Hallie,  
An' I'm grayer still than she,  
But I'll not forget our courtin'  
'Neath the old apple-tree.

Life for us ain't all been summer,  
But I guess we've had our share  
Of its flittin' joys an' pleasures,  
An' a sprinklin' of its care.  
Oft the skies have smiled upon us;  
Then again we've seen 'em  
frown,  
Though our load was ne'er so  
heavy  
That we longed to lay it down.  
But when death does come  
a-callin',  
This my last request shall be,—  
That they'll bury me an' Hallie  
'Neath the old apple tree.

### A PRAYER

O LORD, the hard-won miles  
Have worn my stumbling feet:  
Oh, soothe me with thy smiles,  
And make my life complete.

The thorns were thick and keen  
Where'er I trembling trod;  
The way was long between  
My wounded feet and God.

Where healing waters flow  
Do thou my footsteps lead.  
My heart is aching so;  
Thy gracious balm I need.

### PASSION AND LOVE

A MAIDEN wept and, as a comforter,  
Came one who cried, "I love thee," and he seized  
Her in his arms and kissed her  
with hot breath,  
That dried the tears upon her  
flaming cheeks.  
While evermore his boldly blazing eye  
Burned into hers; but she uncom-  
forted  
Shrank from his arms and only  
wept the more.

Then one came and gazed mutely  
in her face  
With wide and wistful eyes; but  
still aloof  
He held himself; as with a reverent fear,  
As one who knows some sacred  
presence nigh.  
And as she wept he mingled tear  
with tear,  
That cheered her soul like dew a  
dusty flower,—  
Until she smiled, approached, and  
touched his hand!

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

## THE SEEDLING

As a quiet little seedling  
Lay within its darksome bed,  
To itself it fell a-talking,  
And this is what it said:  
"I am not so very robust,  
But I'll do the best I can;"  
And the seedling from that  
moment  
Its work of life began.  
So it pushed a little leaflet  
Up into the light of day,  
To examine the surroundings  
And show the rest the way.  
The leaflet liked the prospect,  
So it called its brother, Stem;  
Then two other leaflets heard it,  
And quickly followed them.  
To be sure, the haste and hurry  
Made the seedling sweat and  
pant;  
But almost before it knew it  
It found itself a plant.  
The sunshine poured upon it,  
And the clouds they gave a  
shower;  
And the little plant kept growing  
Till it found itself a flower.  
Little folks, be like the seedling,  
Always do the best you can;  
Every child must share life's  
labor  
Just as well as every man.

And the sun and showers will  
help you  
Through the lonesome, strug-  
gling hours,  
Till you raise to light and beauty  
Virtue's fair, unfading flowers.

## PROMISE

I GREW a rose within a garden  
fair,  
And, tending it with more than  
loving care,  
I thought how, with the glory of  
its bloom,  
I should the darkness of my life  
illumine;  
And, watching, ever smiled to see  
the lusty bud  
Drink freely in the summer sun to  
tinct its blood.  
My rose began to open, and its  
hue  
Was sweet to me as to its sun and  
dew;  
I watched it taking on its ruddy  
flame  
Until the day of perfect blooming  
came,  
Then hasted I with smiles to find  
it blushing red—  
Too late! Some thoughtless child  
had plucked my rose and fled

# PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

## FULFILMENT.

I GREW a rose once more to please  
mine eyes.  
All things to aid it—dew, sun,  
wind, fair skies—  
Were kindly; and to shield it  
from despoil,  
I fenced it safely in with grateful  
toil.  
No other hand than mine shall  
pluck this flower, said I,  
And I was jealous of the bee that  
hovered nigh.  
It grew for days; I stood hour  
after hour  
To watch the slow unfolding of  
the flower,  
And then I did not leave its side  
at all,  
Lest some mischance my flower  
should befall.  
At last, oh joy! the central petals  
burst apart.  
It blossomed—but, alas! a worm  
was at its heart!

## SONG

My heart to thy heart,  
My hand to thine;  
My lip to thy lips,  
Kisses are wine  
Brewed for the lover in sunshine  
and shade;  
Let me drink deep, then, my  
African maid.

Lily to lily,  
Rose unto rose;  
My love to thy love  
Tenderly grows.  
Rend not the oak and the ivy in  
twain,  
Nor the swart maid from her  
swarthier swain.

## AN ANTE-BELLUM SER- MON

WE is gathahed hyeah, my  
brothahs,  
In dis howlin' wildaness,  
Fu' to speak some words of com-  
fo't  
To each othah in distress.  
An' we chooses fu' ouah subjec'  
Dis—we'll 'splain it by an'  
by;  
"An' de Lawd said, 'Moses,  
Moses,'  
An' de man said, 'Hyeah am  
I.'"

Now ole Pher'oh, down in Egypt,  
Was de wuss man evah bo'n,  
An' he had de Hebrew chillun  
Down dah wukin' in his co'n;  
'T well de Lawd got tiahed o' his  
foolin',  
An' sez he: "I'll let him  
know—  
Look hyeah, Moses, go tell  
Pher'oh  
Fu' to let dem chillun go."

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

"An' ef he refuse to do it,  
I will make him rue de houah,  
Fu' I'll empty down on Egypt  
All de vials of my powah."  
Yes, he did — an' Pher'oh's ahmy  
Was n't wuth a ha'f a dime;  
Fu' de Lawd will he'p his chillun,  
You kin trust him evah time.

An' yo' enemies may 'sail you  
In de back an' in de front;  
But de Lawd is all aroun' you,  
Fu' to ba' de battle's brunt.  
Dey kin fo'ge yo' chains an'  
shackles

F'om de mountains to de sea;  
But de Lawd will sen' some  
Moses  
Fu' to set his chillun free.

An' de lan' shall hyeah his thun-  
dah,  
Lak a blas' f'om Gab'el's ho'n,  
Fu' de Lawd of hosts is mighty  
When he girds his ahmor on.  
But fu' feah some one mistakes  
me,  
I will pause right hyeah to say,  
Dat I'm still a-preachin' ancient,  
I ain't talkin' 'bout to-day.

But I tell you, fellah christuns,  
Things 'll happen mighty  
strange;  
Now, de Lawd done dis fu' Isrul,  
An' his ways don't nevah  
change,

An' de love he showed to Isrul  
Was n't all on Isrul spent;  
Now don't run an' tell yo' mas-  
tahs

Dat I's preachin' discontent.  
'Cause I is n't; I'se a-judgin'  
Bible people by deir ac's;  
I'se a-givin' you de Scriptuah,  
I'se a-handin' you de fac's.  
Cose ole Pher'oh b'lieved in  
slav'ry,  
But de Lawd he let him see,  
Dat de people he put bref in,—  
Evah mothah's son was free.

An' dahs othahs thinks lak  
Pher'oh,  
But dey calls de Scriptuah liar  
Fu' de Bible says "a servant  
Is a-worthy of his hire."  
An' you cain't git roun' nor thoo  
dat,  
An' you cain't git ovah it,  
Fu' whatevah place you git in,  
Dis hyeah Bible too 'll fit.

So you see de Lawd's intention,  
Evah sence de worl' began,  
Was dat His almighty freedom  
Should belong to evah man,  
But I think it would be bertah,  
Ef I'd pause agin to say,  
Dat I'm talkin' 'bout ouah free-  
dom  
In a Bibleistic way.

But de Moses is a-comin',  
An' he's comin', suah and fas'

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

We kin hyeah his feet a-trompin',  
We kin hyeah his trumpit blas'.  
But I want to wa'n you people,  
Don't you git too brigity;  
An' don't you git to braggin'  
'Bout dese things, you wait an'  
see.

But when Moses wif his powah  
Comes an' sets us chillun free,  
We will praise de gracious Mastah  
Dat has gin us liberty;  
An' we'll shout ouah halleluyahs,  
On dat mighty reck'nin' day,  
When we 'se reco'nised ez citiz'—  
Huh uh! Chillun, let us pray!

### ODE TO ETHIOPIA

O MOTHER RACE! to thee I  
bring  
This pledge of faith unwavering,  
This tribute to thy glory.  
I know the pangs which thou  
didst feel,  
When Slavery crushed thee with  
its heel,  
With thy dear blood all gory.

Sad days were those — ah, sad  
indeed!  
But through the land the fruitful  
seed  
Of better times was growing.  
The plant of freedom upward  
sprung,

And spread its leaves so fresh and  
young —  
Its blossoms now are blowing.

On every hand in this fair land,  
Proud Ethiope's swarthy children  
stand

Beside their fairer neighbor;  
The forests flee before their stroke,  
Their hammers ring, their forges  
smoke,—  
They stir in honest labour.

They tread the fields where  
honour calls;  
Their voices sound through sen-  
ate halls

In majesty and power.  
To right they cling; the hymns  
they sing  
Up to the skies in beauty ring,  
And bolder grow each hour.

Be proud, my Race, in mind and  
soul;  
Thy name is writ on Glory's scroll  
In characters of fire.  
High 'mid the clouds of Fame's  
bright sky  
Thy banner's blazoned folds now  
fly,  
And truth shall lift them  
higher.

Thou hast the right to noble pride,  
Whose spotless robes were purified  
By blood's severe baptism.  
Upon thy brow the cross was laid,



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

And labour's painful sweat-beads  
made

A consecrating chrism.

No other race, or white or black,  
When bound as thou wert, to the  
rack,

So seldom stooped to grieving;  
No other race, when free again,  
Forgot the past and proved them  
men

So noble in forgiving.

Go on and up! Our souls and  
eyes

Shall follow thy continuous rise;

Our ears shall list thy story  
From bards who from thy root  
shall spring,

And proudly tune their lyres to  
sing

Of Ethiopia's glory.

### THE CORN-STALK FIDDLE

WHEN the corn's all cut and the  
bright stalks shine

Like the burnished spears of a  
field of gold;

When the field-mice rich on the  
nubbins dine,

And the frost comes white and  
the wind blows cold;

Then it's heigho! fellows and hi-  
diddle-diddle,

For the time is ripe for the corn-  
stalk fiddle.

And you take a stalk that is  
straight and long,

With an expert eye to its  
worthy points,

And you think of the bubbling  
strains of song

That are bound between its  
pithy joints —

Then you cut out strings, with a  
bridge in the middle,

With a corn-stalk bow for a corn-  
stalk fiddle.

Then the strains that grow as you  
draw the bow

O'er the yielding strings with  
a practised hand!

And the music's flow never loud  
but low

Is the concert note of a fairy  
band.

Oh, your dainty songs are a misty  
riddle

To the simple sweets of the corn-  
stalk fiddle.

When the eve comes on, and our  
work is done,

And the sun drops down with a  
tender glance,

With their hearts all prime for  
the harmless fun,

Come the neighbor girls for  
the evening's dance,

And they wait for the well-  
known twist and twid-  
dle —



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

More time than tune — from the  
corn-stalk fiddle.

Then brother Jabez takes the bow,  
While Ned stands off with Susan Bland,  
Then Henry stops by Milly Snow,  
And John takes Nellie Jones's hand,  
While I pair off with Mandy Biddle,  
And scrape, scrape, scrape goes  
the corn-stalk fiddle.

"Salute your partners," comes the call,  
"All join hands and circle round,"  
"Grand train back," and "Balance all,"  
Footsteps lightly spurn the ground.  
"Take your lady and balance down the middle"  
To the merry strains of the corn-stalk fiddle.

So the night goes on and the dance  
is o'er,  
And the merry girls are homeward gone,  
But I see it all in my sleep once more,  
And I dream till the very break of dawn  
Of an impish dance on a red-hot griddle

To the screech and scrape of a  
corn-stalk fiddle.

### THE MASTER-PLAYER

AN old, worn harp that had been  
played  
Till all its strings were loose and  
frayed,  
Joy, Hate, and Fear, each one  
essayed,  
To play. But each in turn had  
found  
No sweet responsiveness of sound.  
Then Love the Master-Player  
came  
With heaving breast and eyes  
afame;  
The Harp he took all undismayed,  
Smote on its strings, still strange  
to song,  
And brought forth music sweet  
and strong.

### THE MYSTERY

I WAS not; now I am — a few  
days hence  
I shall not be; I fain would look  
before  
And after, but can neither do;  
some Power  
Or lack of power says "no" to all  
I would.  
I stand upon a wide and sunless  
plain,

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Nor chart nor steel to guide my  
steps aright.

Whene'er, o'ercoming fear, I dare  
to move,

I grope without direction and by  
chance.

Some feign to hear a voice and  
feel a hand

That draws them ever upward  
thro' the gloom.

But I — I hear no voice and touch  
no hand,

Tho' oft thro' silence infinite I  
list,

And strain my hearing to supernal  
sounds;

Tho' oft thro' fateful darkness do  
I reach,

And stretch my hand to find that  
other hand.

I question of th' eternal bending  
skies

That seem to neighbor with the  
novice earth;

But they roll on, and daily shut  
their eyes

On me, as I one day shall do on  
them,

And tell me not the secret that I  
ask.

### NOT THEY WHO SOAR

Not they who soar, but they who  
plod

Their rugged way, unhelped, to  
God

Are heroes; they who higher fare,  
And, flying, fan the upper air,  
Miss all the toil that hugs the sod.  
'Tis they whose backs have felt  
the rod,

Whose feet have pressed the path  
unshod,

May smile upon defeated care,  
Not they who soar.

High up there are no thorns to  
prod,

Nor boulders lurking 'neath the  
clod

To turn the keenness of the share,  
For flight is ever free and rare;  
But heroes they the soil who've  
trod,

Not they who soar!

### WHITTIER

Not o'er thy dust let there be  
spent

The gush of maudlin sentiment;  
Such drift as that is not for thee,  
Whose life and deeds and songs  
agree,

Sublime in their simplicity.

Nor shall the sorrowing tear be  
shed.

O singer sweet, thou art not  
dead!

In spite of time's malignant chill,  
With living fire thy songs shall  
thrill,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

And men shall say, "He liveth  
still!"

Great poets never die, for Earth  
Doth count their lives of too great  
worth

To lose them from her treasured  
store;

So shalt thou live for evermore —  
Though far thy form from mortal  
ken —

Deep in the hearts and minds of  
men.

### TWO SONGS

A BEE that was searching for  
sweets one day

Through the gate of a rose garden  
happened to stray.

In the heart of a rose he hid away,  
And forgot in his bliss the light of  
day,

As sipping his honey he buzzed in  
song;

Though day was waning, he lingered long,

For the rose was sweet, so  
sweet.

A robin sits pluming his ruddy  
breast,

And a madrigal sings to his love  
in her nest:

"Oh, the skies they are blue, the  
fields are green,

And the birds in your nest will  
soon be seen!"

She hangs on his words with a  
thrill of love,

And chirps to him as he sits above  
For the song is sweet, so sweet.

A maiden was out on a summer's  
day

With the winds and the waves  
and the flowers at play;

And she met with a youth of  
gentle air,

With the light of the sunshine on  
his hair.

Together they wandered the flow-  
ers among;

They loved, and loving they lin-  
gered long,

For to love is sweet, so sweet.

---

BIRD of my lady's bower,

Sing her a song;

Tell her that every hour,

All the day long,

Thoughts of her come to me,

Filling my brain

With the warm ecstasy

Of love's refrain.

Little bird! happy bird!

Being so near,

Where e'en her slightest word

Thou mayest hear,

Seeing her glancing eyes,

Sheen of her hair,

Thou art in paradise,—

Would I were there.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

I am so far away,  
Thou art so near;  
Plead with her, birdling gay,  
Plead with my dear.  
Rich be thy recompense,  
Fine be thy fee,  
If through thine eloquence  
She hearken me.

### A BANJO SONG

OH, dere's lots o' keer an' trouble  
In dis world to swaller down;  
An' ol' Sorrer's purty lively  
In her way o' gittin' roun'.  
Yet dere's times when I furgit  
em,—  
Aches an' pains an' troubles  
all,—  
An' it's when I tek at ebenin'  
My ol' banjo f'om de wall.

'Bout de time dat night is fallin'  
An' my daily wu'k is done,  
An' above de shady hilltops  
I kin see de settin' sun;  
When de quiet, restful shadders  
Is beginnin' jes' to fall,—  
Den I take de little banjo  
F'om its place upon de wall.

Den my fam'ly gadders roun' me  
In de fadin' o' de light,  
Ez I strike de strings to try 'em  
Ef dey all is tuned er-right.  
An' it seems we're so nigh heaben  
We kin hyeah de angels sing

When de music o' dat banjo  
Sets my cabin all er-ring.

An' my wife an' all de othahs,—  
Male an' female, small an'  
big,—

Even up to gray-haired granny,  
Seem jes' boun' to do a jig;  
'Twell I change de style o' music,  
Change de movement an' de  
time,

An' de ringin' little banjo  
Plays an ol' hea't-feelin' hime.

An' somehow my th'oat gits choky,  
An' a lump keeps tryin' to rise  
Lak it wan'ed to ketch de water  
Dat was flowin' to my eyes;  
An' I feel dat I could sorter  
Knock de socks clean off o' sin  
Ez I hyeah my po' ol' granny  
Wif huh tremblin' voice jine in.

Den we all th'ow in our voices  
Fu' to he'p de chune out too,  
Lak a big camp-meetin' choiry  
Tryin' to sing a mou'nah th'oo.  
An' our th'oahts let out de music,  
Sweet an' solemn, loud an' free,  
'Twell de raftahs o' my cabin  
Echo wif de melody.

Oh, de music o' de banjo,  
Quick an' deb'lish, solemn  
slow,  
Is de greates' joy an' solace  
Dat a weary slave kin know!

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

So jes' let me hyeah it ringin',  
Dough de chune be po' an'  
rough,  
It's a pleasure; an' de pleasures  
O' dis life is few enough.

Now, de blessed little angels  
Up in heaben, we are told,  
Don't do nothin' all dere lifetime  
'Ceptin' play on ha'ps o' gold.  
Now I think heaben 'd be mo'  
homelike

Ef we'd hyeah some music fall  
F'om a real ol'-fashioned banjo,  
Like dat one upon de wall.

### LONGING

If you could sit with me beside  
the sea to-day,  
And whisper with me sweetest  
dreamings o'er and o'er;  
I think I should not find the  
clouds so dim and gray,  
And not so loud the waves com-  
plaining at the shore.

If you could sit with me upon the  
shore to-day,  
And hold my hand in yours as in  
the days of old,  
I think I should not mind the chill  
baptismal spray,  
Nor find my hand and heart and  
all the world so cold.

If you could walk with me upon  
the strand to-day,

And tell me that my longing love  
had won your own,  
I think all my sad thoughts would  
then be put away,  
And I could give back laughter  
for the Ocean's moan!

### THE PATH

THERE are no beaten paths to  
Glory's height,  
There are no rules to compass  
greatness known;  
Each for himself must cleave a  
path alone,  
And press his own way forward  
in the fight.  
Smooth is the way to ease and  
calm delight,  
And soft the road Sloth chooseth  
for her own;  
But he who craves the flower of  
life full-blown,  
Must struggle up in all his armor  
dight!  
What though the burden bear him  
sorely down  
And crush to dust the mountain  
of his pride,  
Oh, then, with strong heart let  
him still abide;  
For rugged is the roadway to  
renown,  
Nor may he hope to gain the en-  
vied crown,  
Till he hath thrust the looming  
rocks aside.

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

## THE LAWYERS' WAYS

I'VE been list'nin' to them lawyers  
In the court house up the street,  
An' I've come to the conclusion  
That I'm most completely beat.  
Fust one feller riz to argy,  
An' he boldly waded in  
As he dressed the tremblin' pris'ner  
In a coat o' deep-dyed sin.

Why, he painted him all over  
In a hue o' blackest crime,  
An' he smeared his reputation  
With the thickest kind o'  
grime,  
Tell I found myself a-wond'rin',  
In a misty way and dim,  
How the Lord had come to fashion  
Sich an awful man as him.

Then the other lawyer started,  
An' with brimmin', tearful  
eyes,  
Said his client was a martyr  
That was brought to sacrifice.  
An' he give to that same pris'ner  
Every blessed human grace,  
Tell I saw the light o' virtue  
Fairly shinin' from his face.

Then I own 'at I was puzzled  
How sich things could rightly  
be;  
An' this 'aggervatin' question  
Seems to keep a-puzzlin' me.  
So, will some one please inform  
me,  
An' this mystery unroll —

How an angel an' a devil  
Can persess the self-same soul?

## ODE FOR MEMORIAL DAY

DONE are the toils and the weariness  
some marches,

Done is the summons of bugle  
and drum.

Softly and sweetly the sky over-  
arches,

Shelt'ring a land where Rebel-  
lion is dumb.

Dark were the days of the coun-  
try's derangement,

Sad were the hours when the  
conflict was on,

But through the gloom of frater-  
nal estrangement

God sent his light, and we wel-  
come the dawn.

O'er the expanse of our mighty  
dominions,

Sweeping away to the uttermost  
parts,

Peace, the wide-flying, on untiring  
pinions,

Bringeth her message of joy to  
our hearts.

Ah, but this joy which our minds  
cannot measure,

What did it cost for our fathers  
to gain!

Bought at the price of the heart's  
dearest treasure,

Born out of travail and sorrow  
and pain;

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Born in the battle where fleet  
Death was flying,  
Slaying with sabre-stroke bloody  
and fell;

Born where the heroes and mar-  
tyrs were dying,  
Torn by the fury of bullet and  
shell.

Ah, but the day is past: silent the  
rattle,  
And the confusion that followed  
the fight.

Peace to the heroes who died in  
the battle,  
Martyrs to truth and the crown-  
ing of Right!

Out of the blood of a conflict fra-  
ternal,

Out of the dust and the dimness  
of death,

Burst into blossoms of glory eter-  
nal

Flowers that sweeten the world  
with their breath.

Flowers of charity, peace, and  
devotion

Bloom in the hearts that are  
empty of strife;

Love that is boundless and broad  
as the ocean

Leaps into beauty and fulness  
of life.

So, with the singing of pæans and  
chorals,

And with the flag flashing high  
in the sun,

Place on the graves of our heroes  
the laurels

Which their unfaltering valor  
has won!

### PREMONITION

DEAR heart, good-night!  
Nay, list awhile that sweet voice  
singing

When the world is all so bright,  
And the sound of song sets the  
heart a-ringing,

Oh, love, it is not right —  
Not then to say, "Good-  
night."

Dear heart, good-night!  
The late winds in the lake weeds  
shiver,

And the spray flies cold and  
white.

And the voice that sings gives a  
telltale quiver —

"Ah, yes, the world is bright,  
But, dearest heart, good-  
night!"

Dear heart, good-night!  
And do not longer seek to hold  
me!

For my soul is in affright  
As the fearful glooms in their  
pall enfold me.

See him who sang how white  
And still; so, dear, good-  
night.



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Dear heart, good-night!  
Thy hand I'll press no more for-  
ever,  
And mine eyes shall lose the  
light;  
For the great white wraith by the  
winding river  
Shall check my steps with  
might.  
So, dear, good-night, good-  
night!

### RETROSPECTION

WHEN you and I were young, the  
days  
Were filled with scent of pink  
and rose,  
And full of joy from dawn till  
close,  
From morning's mist till evening's  
haze.  
And when the robin sung his  
song  
The verdant woodland ways  
along,  
We whistled louder than he  
sung.  
And school was joy, and work was  
sport  
For which the hours were all too  
short,  
When you and I were young,  
my boy,  
When you and I were young.

When you and I were young, the  
woods  
Brimmed bravely o'er with every  
joy  
To charm the happy-hearted  
boy.  
The quail turned out her timid  
broods;  
The prickly copse, a hostess  
fine,  
Held high black cups of harm-  
less wine;  
And low the laden grape-vine  
swung  
With beads of night-kissed ame-  
thyst  
Where buzzing lovers held their  
tryst,  
When you and I were young,  
my boy,  
When you and I were young.

When you and I were young, the  
cool  
And fresh wind fanned our  
fevered brows  
When tumbling o'er the scented  
mows,  
Or stripping by the dimpling  
pool,  
Sedge-fringed about its shin-  
ing face,  
Save where we'd worn an em-  
erald ring place.  
How with our shouts the  
calm banks rung!

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

How flashed the spray as we  
plunged in,—

Pure gems that never caused a  
sin!

When you and I were young,  
my boy,

When you and I were young.

When you and I were young, we  
heard

All sounds of Nature with de-  
light,—

The whirr of wing in sudden  
flight,

The chirping of the baby-bird.

The columbine's red bells were  
rung;

The locust's vested chorus  
sung;

While every wind his zithern  
strung

To high and holy-sounding keys,  
And played sonatas in the trees—

When you and I were young,  
my boy,

When you and I were young.

When you and I were young, we  
knew

To shout and laugh, to work  
and play,

And night was partner to the  
day

In all our joys. So swift time  
flew

On silent wings that, ere we  
wist,

The fleeting years had fled un-  
missed;

And from our hearts this cry  
was wrung—

To fill with fond regret and tears  
The days of our remaining years—

“When you and I were young,  
my boy,

When you and I were young.”

### UNEXPRESSED

DEEP in my heart that aches with  
the repression,

And strives with plenitude of  
bitter pain,

There lives a thought that clamors  
for expression,

And spends its undelivered  
force in vain.

What boots it that some other  
may have thought it?

The right of thoughts' expres-  
sion is divine;

The price of pain I pay for it has  
bought it,

I care not who lays claim to it  
—'t is mine!

And yet not mine until it be deliv-  
ered;

The manner of its birth shall  
prove the test.

Alas, alas, my rock of pride is  
shivered—

I beat my brow—the thought  
still unexpressed.

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

## SONG OF SUMMER

Dis is gospel weathah sho'—  
Hills is sawt o' hazy.  
Meddahs level ez a flo'  
Callin' to de lazy.  
Sky all white wif streaks o' blue,  
Sunshine softly gleamin',  
D'ain't no wuk hit 's right to do,  
Nothin' 's right but dreamin'.

Dreamin' by de rivah side  
Wif de watahs glist'nin',  
Feelin' good an' satisfied  
Ez you lay a-list'nin'  
To the little nakid boys  
Splashin' in de watah,  
Hollerin' fu' to spress deir joys  
Jes' lak youngsters ought to.

Squir'l a-tippin' on his toes,  
So 's to hide an' view you;  
Whole flocks o' camp-meetin'  
crows  
Shoutin' hallelujah.  
Peckahwood erpon de tree  
Tappin' lak a hammah;  
Jaybird chattin' wif a bee,  
Tryin' to teach him grammah.

Breeze is blowin' wif perfume,  
Jes' enough to tease you;  
Hollyhocks is all in bloom,  
Smellin' fu' to please you.  
Go 'way, folks, an' let me 'lone,  
Times is gettin' dearah—  
Summah's settin' on de th'one,  
An' I'm a-layin' neah huh!

## SPRING SONG

A BLUE-BELL springs upon the  
ledge,  
A lark sits singing in the hedge  
Sweet perfumes scent the balmy  
air,  
And life is brimming everywhere  
What lark and breeze and blue-  
bird sing,  
Is Spring, Spring, Spring!

No more the air is sharp and cold  
The planter wends across the world  
And, glad, beneath the shining  
sky  
We wander forth, my love and I  
And ever in our hearts doth ring  
This song of Spring, Spring!

For life is life and love is love,  
'Twixt maid and man or dove and  
dove.  
Life may be short, life may be  
long,  
But love will come, and to its  
song  
Shall this refrain for ever cling  
Of Spring, Spring, Spring!

## TO LOUISE

OH, the poets may sing of their  
Lady Irenes,  
And may rave in their rhymes  
about wonderful queens;  
But I throw my poetical wings to  
the breeze,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

And soar in a song to my Lady  
Louise.

A sweet little maid, who is dearer,  
I ween,  
Than any fair duchess, or even a  
queen.

When speaking of her I can't plod  
in my prose,  
For she's the wee lassie who gave  
me a rose.

Since poets, from seeing a lady's  
lip curled,

Have written fair verse that has  
sweetened the world;

Why, then, should not I give the  
space of an hour

To making a song in return for a  
flower?

I have found in my life—it has  
not been so long—

There are too few of flowers—too  
little of song.

So out of that blossom, this lay of  
mine grows,

For the dear little lady who gave  
me the rose.

I thank God for innocence, dearer  
than Art,

That lights on a by-way which  
leads to the heart,

And led by an impulse no less  
than divine,

Walks into the temple and sits at  
the shrine.

I would rather pluck daisies that  
grow in the wild,

Or take one simple rose from the  
hand of a child,

Then to breathe the rich fragrance  
of flowers that bide

In the gardens of luxury, passion,  
and pride.

I know not; my wee one, how  
came you to know

Which way to my heart was the  
right way to go;

Unless in your purity, soul-clean  
and clear,

God whispers his messages into  
your ear.

You have now had my song, let  
me end with a prayer

That your life may be always  
sweet, happy, and fair;

That your joys may be many, and  
absent your woes,

O dear little lady who gave me  
the rose!

### THE RIVALS

'T WAS three an' thirty year ago,  
When I was ruther young, you  
know,

I had my last an' only fight  
About a gal one summer night.

'T was me an' Zekel Johnson;  
Zeke

'N' me'd be'n spattin' 'bout a  
week,

Each of us tryin' his best to show  
That he was Liza Jones's beau.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

We could n't neither prove the  
thing,

Fur she was fur too sharp to fling  
One over fur the other one

An' by so doin' stop the fun  
That we chaps did n't have the  
sense

To see she got at our expense,  
But that 's the way a feller does,  
Fur boys is fools an' allus was.  
An' when they 's females in the  
game

I reckon men 's about the same.  
Well, Zeke an' me went on that  
way

An' fussed an' quarrelled day by  
day;

While Liza, mindin' not the  
fuss,

Jest kep' a-goin' with both of us,  
Tell we pore chaps, that 's Zeke  
an' me,

Was jest plum mad with jeal-  
ousy.

Well, fur a time we kep' our  
places,

An' only showed by frownin'  
faces

An' looks 'at well our meanin'  
boded

How full o' fight we both was  
loaded.

At last it come, the thing broke  
out,

An' this is how it come about.  
One night ('t was fair, you 'll all  
agree)

I got Eliza's company,  
An' leavin' Zekel in the lurch,  
Went trottin' off with her to  
church.

An' jest as we had took our seat  
(Eliza lookin' fair an' sweet),  
Why, I jest could n't help but grin  
When Zekel come a-bouncin' in  
As furious as the law allows.

He 'd jest be'n up to Liza's house,  
To find her gone, then come to  
church

To have this end put to his  
search.

I guess I laffed that meetin'  
through,

An' not a mortal word I knew  
Of what the preacher preached er  
read

Er what the choir sung er said.  
Fur every time I 'd turn my head  
I could n't skeercely help but see  
'At Zekel had his eye on me.

An' he 'ud sort o' turn an' twist  
An' grind his teeth an' shake his  
fist.

I laughed, fur la! the hull church  
seen us,

An' knowed that suthin' was be-  
tween us.

Well, meetin' out, we started  
hum,

I sorter feelin' what would come.  
We'd jest got out, when up  
stepped Zeke,

An' said, "Scuse me, I 'd like to  
speak

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

To you a minute." "Cert," said  
I —  
A-nudgin' Liza on the sly  
An' laughin' in my sleeve with  
glee,  
I asked her, please, to pardon me.  
We walked away a step er two,  
Jest to git out o' Liza's view,  
An' then Zeke said, "I want to  
know  
Ef you think you're Eliza's beau,  
An' 'at I'm goin' to let her go  
Hum with sich a chap as you?"  
An' I said bold, "You bet I do."  
Then Zekel, sneerin', said 'at he  
Did n't want to hender me.  
But then he 'lowed the gal was  
his  
An' 'at he guessed he knowed his  
biz,  
An' was n't feared o' all my kin  
With all my friends an' chums  
throwed in.  
Some other things he mentioned  
there  
That no born man could no ways  
bear  
Er think o' ca'mly tryin' to stan'  
Ef Zeke had be'n the bigges' man  
In town, an' not the leanest runt  
'At time an' labor ever stunt.  
An' so I let my fist go "bim,"  
I thought I'd mos' nigh finished  
him.  
But Zekel did n't take it so.  
He jest ducked down an' dodged  
my blow

An' then come back at me so hard,  
I guess I must 'a' hurt the yard,  
Er spilet the grass plot where I  
fell,  
An' sakes alive it hurt me; well,  
It would n't be'n so bad, you see,  
But he jest kep' a-hittin' me.  
An' I hit back an' kicked an'  
pawed,  
But 't seemed 't was mostly air I  
clawed,  
While Zekel used his science well  
A-makin' every motion tell.  
He punched an' hit, why, good-  
ness lands,  
Seemed like he had a dozen hands.  
Well, afterwhile they stopped the  
fuss,  
An' some one kindly parted us.  
All beat an' cuffed an' clawed an'  
scratched,  
An' needin' both our faces  
patched,  
Each started hum a different way;  
An' what o' Liza, do you say,  
Why, Liza — little humbug —  
dern her,  
Why, she'd gone home with  
Hiram Turner.

### THE LOVER AND THE MOON

A LOVER whom duty called over  
the wave,  
With himself communed:  
"Will my love be true

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

If left to herself? Had I bet-  
ter not sue  
Some friend to watch over her,  
good and grave?  
But my friend might fail in my  
need," he said,  
"And I return to find love  
dead.

Since friendships fade like the  
flow'rs of June,  
I will leave her in charge of the  
stable moon."

Then he said to the moon: "O  
dear old moon,

Who for years and years from  
thy thrown above

Hast nurtured and guarded  
young lovers and love,

My heart has but come to its  
waiting June,

And the promise time of the  
budding vine;

Oh, guard thee well this love  
of mine."

And he harked him then while  
all was still,

And the pale moon answered  
and said, "I will."

And he sailed in his ship o'er  
many seas,

And he wandered wide o'er  
strange far strands:

In isles of the south and in Ori-  
ent lands,

Where pestilence lurks in the  
breath of the breeze.

But his star was high, so he  
braved the main,

And sailed him blithely home  
again;

And with joy he bended his  
footsteps soon

To learn of his love from the  
matron moon.

She sat as of yore, in her olden  
place,

Serene as death, in her silver  
chair.

A white rose gleamed in her  
whiter hair,

And the tint of a blush was on  
her face.

At sight of the youth she sadly  
bowed

And hid her face 'neath a gra-  
cious cloud.

She faltered faint on the night's  
dim marge,

But "How," spoke the youth,  
"have you kept your  
charge?"

The moon was sad at a trust ill-  
kept;

The blush went out in her  
blanching cheek,

And her voice was timid and  
low and weak,

As she made her plea and sighed  
and wept.

"Oh, another prayed and an-  
other plead,



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

And I could n't resist," she  
answering said;  
"But love still grows in the  
hearts of men:  
Go forth, dear youth, and love  
again."

But he turned him away from her  
proffered grace.

"Thou art false, O moon, as  
the hearts of men,  
I will not, will not love again."  
And he turned sheer 'round with  
a soul-sick face

To the sea, and cried: "Sea,  
curse the moon,

Who makes her vows and for-  
gets so soon."

And the awful sea with anger  
stirred,

And his breast heaved hard as  
he lay and heard.

And ever the moon wept down in  
rain,

And ever her sighs rose high in  
wind;

But the earth and sea were deaf  
and blind,

And she wept and sighed her  
griefs in vain.

And ever at night, when the  
storm is fierce,

The cries of a wraith through  
the thunder pierce;

And the waves strain their aw-  
ful hands on high

To tear the false moon from the  
sky.

### CONSCIENCE AND RE- MORSE

"GOOD-BYE," I said to my con-  
science —

"Good-bye for aye and aye,"  
And I put her hands off harshly,  
And turned my face away;  
And conscience smitten sorely  
Returned not from that day.

But a time came when my spirit  
Grew weary of its pace;

And I cried: "Come back, my  
conscience;

I long to see thy face."

But conscience cried: "I cannot;  
Remorse sits in my place."

### IONE

I

AH, yes, 't is sweet still to remem-  
ber,

Though 'twere less painful to  
forget;

For while my heart glows like an  
ember,

Mine eyes with sorrow's drops  
are wet,

And, oh, my heart is aching  
yet.

It is a law of mortal pain

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

That old wounds, long accounted well,  
Beneath the memory's potent spell,  
Will wake to life and bleed again.

So 't is with me; it might be better  
If I should turn no look behind,—

If I could curb my heart, and fetter  
From reminiscent gaze my mind,  
Or let my soul go blind — go blind!

But would I do it if I could?  
Nay! ease at such a price were spurned;  
For, since my love was once returned,  
All that I suffer seemeth good.

I know, I know it is the fashion,  
When love has left some heart distressed,  
To weight the air with wordful passion;

But I am glad that in my breast

I ever held so dear a guest.

Love does not come at every nod,  
Or every voice that calleth  
"hasten;"

He seeketh out some heart to chasten,

And whips it, wailing, up to God!

Love is no random road wayfare  
Who where he may must sip his glass.

Love is the King, the Purple Wearer,

Whose guard recks not of treasor  
or grass

To blaze the way that he may pass.

What if my heart be in the blast  
That heralds his triumphant way;

Shall I repine, shall I not say:  
"Rejoice, my heart, the King has passed!"

In life, each heart holds some sad story —

The saddest ones are never told  
I, too, have dreamed of fame and glory,

And viewed the future bright with gold;

But that is as a tale long told  
Mine eyes have lost their youthful flash,

My cunning hand has lost its art;

I am not old, but in my heart  
The ember lies beneath the ash.

I loved! Why not? My heart was youthful,

My mind was filled with healthy thought.

He doubts not whose own self truthful,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Doubt by dishonesty is taught;  
So loved I boldly, fearing  
naught.

did not walk this lowly earth;  
Mine was a newer, higher  
sphere,

Where youth was long and life  
was dear,

and all save love was little worth.

er likeness! Would that I  
might limn it,

As Love did, with enduring  
art;

or dust of days nor death may  
dim it,

Where it lies graven on my  
heart,

Of this sad fabric of my life a  
part.

would that I might paint her  
now

As I beheld her in that day,

Ere her first bloom had passed  
away,

and left the lines upon her brow.

face serene that, beaming  
brightly,

Disarmed the hot sun's glances  
bold.

foot that kissed the ground so  
lightly,

He frowned in wrath and  
deemed her cold,

But loved her still though he  
was old.

A form where every maiden grace  
Bloomed to perfection's richest  
flower,—

The statued pose of conscious  
power,

Like lithe-limbed Dian's of the  
chase.

Beneath a brow too fair for frown-  
ing,

Like moon-lit deeps that glass  
the skies

Till all the hosts above seem  
drowning,

Looked forth her steadfast ha-  
zel eyes,

With gaze serene and purely  
wise.

And over all, her tresses rare,  
Which, when, with his desire

grown weak,

The Night bent down to kiss  
her cheek,

Entrapped and held him captive  
there.

This was Ione; a spirit finer

Ne'er burned to ash its house  
of clay;

A soul instinct with fire diviner  
Ne'er fled athwart the face of  
day,

And tempted Time with earthly  
stay.

Her loveliness was not alone

Of face and form and tresses'  
hue;

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

For aye a pure, high soul shone  
through  
Her every act: this was Ione.

### II

'T was in the radiant summer  
weather,  
When God looked, smiling,  
from the sky;  
And we went wand'ring much to-  
gether  
By wood and lane, Ione and  
I,  
Attracted by the subtle tie  
Of common thoughts and com-  
mon tastes,  
Of eyes whose vision saw the  
same,  
And freely granted beauty's  
claim  
Where others found but worthless  
wastes.

We paused to hear the far bells  
ringing  
Across the distance, sweet and  
clear.  
We listened to the wild bird's  
singing  
The song he meant for his  
mate's ear,  
And deemed our chance to do  
so dear.  
We loved to watch the warrior  
Sun,  
With flaming shield and flaunt-  
ing crest,

Go striding down the golden  
West,  
When Day's long fight was fought  
and won.

And life became a different  
story;  
Where'er I looked, I saw new  
light.  
Earth's self assumed a greater  
glory,  
Mine eyes were cleared  
fuller sight.  
Then first I saw the need of  
might  
Of that fair band, the singing  
throng,  
Who, gifted with the skill of  
vine,  
Take up the threads of life  
spun fine,  
And weave them into soulful  
song.

They sung for me, whose passion  
pressing  
My soul, found vent in song  
nor line.  
They bore the burden of expres-  
sing  
All that I felt, with art's di-  
sign,  
And every word of theirs was  
mine.  
I read them to Ione, oft-times,  
By hill and shore, beneath far  
skies,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

And she looked deeply in mine  
    eyes,  
And knew my love spoke through  
    their rhymes.

Her life was like the stream that  
    floweth,

And mine was like the waiting  
    sea;

Her love was like the flower that  
    bloweth,

And mine was like the search-  
    ing bee —

I found her sweetness all for  
    me.

God plied him in the mint of  
    time,

And coined for us a golden day,

And rolled it ringing down  
    life's way

With love's sweet music in its  
    chime.

And God unclasped the Book of  
    Ages,

And laid it open to our sight;

Upon the dimness of its pages,  
    So long consigned to rayless  
    night,

He shed the glory of his light.

We read them well, we read them  
    long,

And ever thrilling did we see

That love ruled all human-  
    ity,—

The master passion, pure and  
    strong.

### III

To-day my skies are bare and  
    ashen,

And bend on me without a  
    beam.

Since love is held the master-pas-  
    sion,

Its loss must be the pain su-  
    preme —

And grinning Fate has wrecked  
    my dream.

But pardon, dear departed Guest,  
    I will not rant, I will not rail;

For good the grain must feel  
    the flail;

There are whom love has never  
    blessed.

I had and have a younger brother,  
    One whom I loved and love to-  
    day

As never fond and doting mother  
    Adored the babe who found its  
    way

From heavenly scenes into her  
    day.

Oh, he was full of youth's new  
    wine,—

A man on life's ascending slope,  
    Flushed with ambition, full of  
    hope;

And every wish of his was mine.

A kingly youth; the way before  
    him

Was thronged with victories to  
    be won;

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

So joyous, too, the heavens o'er  
him

Were bright with an unchang-  
ing sun,—

His days with rhyme were over-  
run.

Toil had not taught him Nature's  
prose,

Tears had not dimmed his bril-  
liant eyes,

And sorrow had not made him  
wise;

His life was in the budding rose.

I know not how I came to  
waken,

Some instinct pricked my soul  
to sight;

My heart by some vague thrill  
was shaken,—

A thrill so true and yet so  
slight,

I hardly deemed I read aright.

As when a sleeper, ign'rant why,  
Not knowing what mysterious  
hand

Has called him out of slumber-  
land,

Starts up to find some danger  
nigh.

Love is a guest that comes, un-  
bidden,

But, having come, asserts his  
right;

He will not be repressed nor hid-  
den.

And so my brother's dawning  
plight

Became uncovered to my sight.  
Some sound-mote in his passing  
tone

Caught in the meshes of my  
ear;

Some little glance, a shade too  
dear,

Betrayed the love he bore Ione.

What could I do? He was my  
brother,

And young, and full of hope  
and trust;

I could not, dared not try to  
smother

His flame, and turn his heart to  
dust.

I knew how oft life gives a  
crust

To starving men who cry for  
bread;

But he was young, so few his  
days,

He had not learned the great  
world's ways,

Nor Disappointment's volumes  
read.

However fair and rich the booty,  
I could not make his loss my  
gain.

For love is dear, but dearer  
duty,

And here my way was clear and  
plain.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

I saw how I could save him pain.  
And so, with all my day grown  
dim,

That this loved brother's sun  
might shine,

I joined his suit, gave over  
mine,  
And sought Ione, to plead for him.

I found her in an eastern bower,  
Where all day long the am'rous  
sun

Lay by to woo a timid flower.

This day his course was well-  
nigh run,

But still with lingering art he  
spun

Gold fancies on the shadowed  
wall.

The vines waved soft and green  
above,

And there where one might tell  
his love,

I told my griefs — I told her all!

I told her all, and as she heark-  
ened,

A tear-drop fell upon her dress.

With grief her flushing brow was  
darkened;

One sob that she could not re-  
press

Betrayed the depths of her dis-  
tress.

Upon her grief my sorrow fed,  
And I was bowed with unlive  
years,

My heart swelled with a sea of  
tears,  
The tears my manhood could not  
shed.

The world is Rome, and Fate is  
Nero,

Disporting in the hour of  
doom.

God made us men; times make the  
hero —

But in that awful space of  
gloom

I gave no thought but sorrow's  
room.

All — all was dim within that  
bower,

What time the sun divorced the  
day;

And all the shadows, glooming  
gray,

Proclaimed the sadness of the  
hour.

She could not speak — no word  
was needed;

Her look, half strength and half  
despair,

Told me I had not vainly pleaded,  
That she would not ignore my  
prayer.

And so she turned and left me  
there,

And as she went, so passed my  
bliss;

She loved me, I could not mis-  
take —



# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

But for her own and my love's  
sake,

Her womanhood could rise to  
this!

My wounded heart fled swift to  
cover,

And life at times seemed very  
drear.

My brother proved an ardent  
lover —

What had so young a man to  
fear?

He wed Ione within the year.  
No shadow clouds her tranquil  
brow,

Men speak her husband's name  
with pride,

While she sits honored at his  
side —

She is — she must be happy now!

I doubt the course I took no  
longer,

Since those I love seem satisfied.  
The bond between them will grow  
stronger

As they go forward side by  
side;

Then will my pains be jus-  
fied.

Their joy is mine, and that is  
best —

I am not totally bereft;

For I have still the mem'ry  
left —

Love stopped with me — a Royal  
Guest!

## RELIGION

I AM no priest of crooks nor  
creeds,

For human wants and human  
needs

Are more to me than prophets'  
deeds;

And human tears and human  
cares

Affect me more than human  
prayers.

Go, cease your wail, lugubrious  
saint!

You fret high Heaven with your  
plaint.

Is this the "Christian's joy" you  
paint?

Is this the Christian's boasted  
bliss?

Avails your faith no more than  
this?

Take up your arms, come out with  
me,

Let Heav'n alone; humanity  
Needs more and Heaven less from  
thee.

With pity for mankind look  
'round;

Help them to rise — and Heaven  
is found.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

### DEACON JONES' GRIEV- ANCE

I've been watchin' of 'em, par-  
son,

An' I'm sorry fur to say

'At my mind is not contented

With the loose an' keerless  
way

'At the young folks treat the mu-  
sic;

'Tain't the proper sort o'  
choir.

Then I don't believe in Chris-  
tuns

A-singin' hymns for hire.

But I never would 'a' mur-  
mured

An' the matter might 'a' gone

Ef it was n't fur the antics

'At I've seen 'em kerry on;

So I thought it was my dooty

Fur to come to you an' ask

Ef you would n't sort o' gently

Take them singin' folks to task.

Fust, the music they've be'n  
singin'

Will disgrace us mighty soon;

It's a cross between a opry

An' a ol' cotillion tune.

With its dashes an' its quavers

An' its hifalutin style —

Why, it sets my head to swim-  
min'

When I'm comin' down the  
aisle.

Now it might be almost decent

Ef it was n't fur the way

'At they git up there an' sing it,

Hey dum diddle, loud and gay.

Why, it shames the name o'  
sacred

In its brazen wordliness,

An' they've even got "Ol' Hun-  
dred"

In a bold, new-fangled dress.

You'll excuse me, Mr. Parson,

Ef I seem a little sore;

But I've sung the songs of Isr'el

For threescore years an' more,

An' it sort o' hurts my feelin's

Fur to see 'em put away

Fur these harum-scarum ditties

'At is capturin' the day.

There's anuther little happ'nin'

'At I'll mention while I'm  
here,

Jes' to show 'at my objections

All is offered sound and clear.

It was one day they was singin'

An' was doin' well enough —

Singin' good as people could sing

Sich an awful mess o' stuff —

When the choir give a holler,

An' the organ give a groan,

An' they left one weak-voiced fel-  
ler

A-singin' there alone!

But he stuck right to the music,

Tho' 't was tryin' as could  
be;

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

An' when I tried to help him,  
Why, the hull church scowled  
at me.

You say that 's so-low singin',  
Well, I pray the Lord that I  
Growed up when folks was  
willin'

To sing their hymns so high.  
Why, we never had sich doin's  
In the good ol' Bethel days,  
When the folks was all con-  
tented  
With the simple songs of  
praise.

Now I may have spoke too open,  
But 't was too hard to keep  
still,

An' I hope you 'll tell the singers  
'At I bear 'em no ill-will.

'At they all may git to glory  
Is my wish an' my desire,  
But they 'll need some extry train-  
in'

'Fore they jine the heavenly  
choir.

### ALICE

Know you, winds that blow your  
course

Down the verdant valleys,  
That somewhere you must, per-  
force,

Kiss the brow of Alice?  
When her gentle face you find,  
Kiss it softly, naughty wind.

Roses waving fair and sweet  
Thro' the garden alleys,  
Grow into a glory meet  
For the eye of Alice;  
Let the wind your offering bear  
Of sweet perfume, faint and rare.

Lily holding crystal dew  
In your pure white chalice,  
Nature kind hath fashioned you  
Like the soul of Alice;  
It of purest white is wrought,  
Filled with gems of crystal  
thought.

### AFTER THE QUARREL

So we, who 've supped the self-  
same cup,

To-night must lay our friend-  
ship by;

Your wrath has burned your  
judgment up,

Hot breath has blown the ashes  
high.

You say that you are wronged—  
ah, well,

I count that friendship poor,  
at best

A bauble, a mere bagatelle,  
That cannot stand so slight a  
test.

I fain would still have been your  
friend,

And talked and laughed and  
loved with you;

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

But since it must, why, let it end;  
The false but dies, 't is not the  
true.

So we are favored, you and I,  
Who only want the living  
truth.

It was not good to nurse the lie;  
'T is well it died in harmless  
youth.

I go from you to-night to sleep.  
Why, what's the odds? why  
should I grieve?

I have no fund of tears to weep  
For happenings that undeceive.

The days shall come, the days  
shall go

Just as they came and went be-  
fore.

The sun shall shine, the streams  
shall flow

Though you and I are friends no  
more.

And in the volume of my years,  
Where all my thoughts and  
acts shall be,

The page whereon your name  
appears

Shall be forever sealed to me.

Not that I hate you over-much,  
'T is less of hate than love de-  
fied;

Howe'er, our hands no more shall  
touch,

We'll go our ways, the world is  
wide.

## BEYOND THE YEARS

### I

BEYOND the years the answer lies,  
Beyond where brood the grieving  
skies

And Night drops tears.

Where Faith rod-chastened smiles  
to rise

And doff its fears,

And carping Sorrow pines and  
dies —

Beyond the years.

### II

Beyond the years the prayer for rest  
Shall beat no more within the  
breast;

The darkness clears,

And Morn perched on the moun-  
tain's crest

Her form uprears —

The day that is to come is best,  
Beyond the years.

### III

Beyond the years the soul shall find  
That endless peace for which it  
pined,

For light appears,

And to the eyes that still were blind  
With blood and tears,

Their sight shall come all uncon-  
fined

Beyond the years.

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

## AFTER A VISIT

I BE'N down in ole Kentucky  
Fur a week er two, an' say,  
'T wuz ez hard ez breakin' oxen  
Fur to tear myse'f away.  
Allus argerin' 'bout fren'ship  
An' yer hospitality —  
Y' ain't no right to talk about it  
Tell you be'n down there to see.  
  
See jest how they give you welcome  
To the best that 's in the land,  
Feel the sort o' grip they give you  
When they take you by the hand.  
Hear 'em say, "We're glad to  
have you,  
Better stay a week er two;"  
An' the way they treat you makes  
you  
Feel that ev'ry word is true.  
  
Feed you tell you hear the buttons  
Crackin' on yore Sunday vest;  
Haul you roun' to see the wonders  
Tell you have to cry for rest.  
Drink yer health an' pet an' praise  
you  
Tell you git to feel ez great  
Ez the Sheriff o' the county  
Er the Gov'ner o' the State.  
  
Wife, she sez I must be crazy  
'Cause I go on so, an' Nelse  
He 'lows, "Goodness gracious!  
daddy,  
Cain't you talk about nuthin'  
else?"

Well, pleg-gone it, I 'm jes' tickled  
Bein' tickled ain't no sin;  
I be'n down in ole Kentucky,  
'An' I want o' go ag'in.

## CURTAIN

VILLAIN shows his indiscretion,  
Villain's partner makes confession.  
Juvenile, with golden tresses,  
Finds her pa and dons long dresses  
Scapegrace comes home money  
laden,  
Hero comforts tearful maiden,  
Soubrette marries loyal chappie,  
Villain skips, and all are happy.

## THE SPELLIN'-BEE

I NEVER shall furgit that nigh  
when father hitched up Dob  
bin,  
An' all us youngsters clambered in  
an' down the road went bob  
bin'  
To school where we was kep  
at work in every kind o  
weather,  
But where that night a spellin'  
bee was callin' us together.  
'Twas one o' Heaven's banne  
nights, the stars was all  
glitter,  
The moon was shinin' like th  
hand o' God had jest then li  
her.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

- The ground was white with spot-  
less snow, the blast was sort  
o' stingin';
- But underneath our round-about,  
you bet our hearts was sing-  
in'.
- That spellin'-bee had be'n the talk  
o' many a precious moment,
- The youngsters all was wild to see  
jes' what the precious show  
meant,
- An' we whose years was in their  
teens was little less desirous  
O' gittin' to the meetin' so 's our  
sweethearts could admire us.
- So on we went so anxious fur to  
satisfy our mission
- That father had to box our ears,  
to smother our ambition.
- But boxin' ears was too short  
work to hinder cur arrivin',
- He jest turned roun' an' smacked  
us all, an' kep' right on  
a-drivin'.
- Well, soon the schoolhouse hove  
in sight, the winders beamin'  
brightly;
- The sound o' talkin' reached our  
ears, and voices laffin' lightly.
- It puffed us up so full an' big 'at  
I'll jest bet a dollar,
- There wa'n't a feller there but  
felt the strain upon his col-  
lar.
- So down we jumped an' in we  
went ez sprightly ez you  
make 'em,
- But somethin' grabbed us by the  
knees an' straight began to  
shake 'em.
- Fur once within that lighted  
room, our feelin's took a  
canter,
- An' scurried to the zero mark ez  
quick ez Tam O'Shanter.
- 'Cause there was crowds o' peo-  
ple there, both sexes an' all  
stations;
- It looked like all the town had  
come an' brought all their re-  
lations.
- The first I saw was Nettie Gray,  
I thought that girl was  
dearer
- 'N' gold; an' when I got a chance,  
you bet I aided up near  
her.
- An' Farmer Dobbs's girl was  
there, the one 'at Jim was  
sweet on,
- An' Cyrus Jones an' Mandy  
Smith an' Faith an' Patience  
Deaton.
- Then Parson Brown an' Lawyer  
Jones were present — all at-  
tention,
- An' piles on piles of other folks  
too numerous to mention.
- The master rose an' briefly said:  
"Good friends, dear brother  
Crawford,
- To spur the pupils' minds along,  
a little prize has offered.
- To him who spells the best to-

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

- night — or 't may be 'her' —  
no tellin'—
- He offers ez a jest reward, this  
precious work on spellin'."
- A little blue-backed spellin'-book  
with fancy scarlet trimmin';
- We boys devoured it with our  
eyes—so did the girls an'  
women.
- He held it up where all could see,  
then on the table set it,
- An' ev'ry speller in the house felt  
mortal bound to get it.
- At his command we fell in line,  
prepared to do our dooty,
- Outspell the rest an' set 'em down,  
an' carry home the booty.
- 'T was then the merry times be-  
gan, the blunders, an' the  
laffin',
- The nudges an' the nods an' winks  
an' stale good-natured chaf-  
fin'.
- Ole Uncle Hiram Dane was there,  
the closest man a-livin',
- Whose only bugbear seemed to be  
the dreadful fear o' givin'.
- His beard was long, his hair un-  
cut, his clothes all bare an'  
dingy;
- It was n't 'cause the man was  
pore, but jest so mortal  
stingy;
- An' there he sot by Sally Riggs  
a-smilin' an' a-smirkin',
- An' all his children lef' to home a  
diggin' an' a-workin'.
- A widower he was, an' Sal was  
thinkin' 'at she 'd wing him;
- I reckon he was wond'rin' what  
them rings o' hern would  
bring him.
- An' when the spellin'-test com-  
menced, he up an' took his  
station,
- A-spellin' with the best o' them  
to beat the very nation.
- An' when he 'd spell some young-  
ster down, he 'd turn to look  
at Sally,
- An' say: "The teachin' nowadays  
can't be o' no great vally."
- But true enough the adage says,  
"Pride walks in slipp'ry  
places,"
- Fur soon a thing occurred that  
put a smile on all our faces.
- The laffter jest kep' ripplin' 'roun'  
an' teacher could n't quell it,
- Fur when he give out "charity"  
ole Hiram could n't spell it.
- But laffin' 's ketchin' an' it  
throwed some others off their  
bases,
- An' folks 'u'd miss the very word  
that seemed to fit their cases.
- Why, fickle little Jessie Lee come  
near the house upsettin'
- By puttin' in a double "kay" to  
spell the word "coquettin'."
- An' when it come to Cyrus Jones,  
it tickled me all over —
- Him settin' up to Mandy Smith  
an' got sot down on "lover."



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

But Lawyer Jones of all gone men  
did shorely look the gonest,  
When he found out that he 'd fur-  
got to put the "h" in "hon-  
est."

An' Parson Brown, whose ser-  
mons were too long fur tol-  
eration,

Caused lots o' smiles by missin'  
when they give out "con-  
densation."

So one by one they giv' it up—  
the big words kep' a-landin',

Till me an' Nettie Gray was left,  
the only ones a-standin',

An' then my inward strife began  
—I guess my mind was  
petty—

I did so want that spellin'-book;  
but then to spell down Net-  
tie

Jest sort o' went ag'in my grain—  
I somehow could n't do it,

An' when I git a notion fixed,  
I'm great on stickin' to it.

So when they giv' the next word  
out—I had n't orter tell  
it,

But then 't was all fur Nettie's  
sake—I missed so's she  
could spell it.

She spelt the word, then looked at  
me so lovin'-like an' mello',

I tell you 't sent a hunderd pins  
a shootin' through a fello'.

O' course I had to stand the jokes  
an' chaffin' of the fello's,

But when they handed her the  
book I vow I was n't jealous.

We sung a hymn, an' Parson  
Brown dismissed us like he  
orter,

Fur, la! he 'd learned a thing er  
two an' made his blessin'  
shorter.

'T was late an' cold when we got  
out, but Nettie liked cold  
weather,

An' so did I, so we agreed we 'd  
jest walk home together.

We both wuz silent, fur of words  
we nuther had a surplus,

'Till she spoke out quite sudden  
like, "You missed that word  
on purpose."

Well, I declare it frightened me;  
at first I tried denyin',

But Nettie, she jest smiled an'  
smiled, she knowed that I  
was lyin'.

Sez she: "That book is yourn by  
right;" sez I: "It never  
could be—"

I—I—you—ah—" an' there  
I stuck, an' well she under-  
stood me.

So we agreed that later on when  
age had giv' us tether,

We 'd jine our lots an' settle down  
to own that book together.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

### KEEP A-PLUGGIN' AWAY

I 'VE a humble little motto  
That is homely, though it's  
true,—

Keep a-pluggin' away.

It's a thing when I've an object  
That I always try to do,—

Keep a-pluggin' away.

When you've rising storms to  
quell,

When opposing waters swell,

It will never fail to tell,—

Keep a-pluggin' away.

If the hills are high before  
And the paths are hard to climb,

Keep a-pluggin' away.

And remember that successes

Come to him who bides his  
time,—

Keep a-pluggin' away.

From the greatest to the least,  
None are from the rule released.

Be thou toiler, poet, priest,

Keep a-pluggin' away.

Delve away beneath the surface,  
There is treasure farther down,—

Keep a-pluggin' away.

Let the rain come down in tor-  
rents,

Let the threat'ning heavens frown,

Keep a-pluggin' away.

When the clouds have rolled  
away,

There will come a brighter day  
All your labor to repay,—  
Keep a-pluggin' away.

There 'll be lots of sneers to swal-  
low,

There 'll be lots of pain to bear,—  
Keep a-pluggin' away.

If you've got your eye on heaven,  
Some bright day you'll wake up  
there,—

Keep a-pluggin' away.  
Perseverance still is king;  
Time its sure reward will bring;  
Work and wait unwearying,—  
Keep a-pluggin' away.

### NIGHT OF LOVE

THE moon has left the sky, love,  
The stars are hiding now,  
And frowning on the world, love,  
Night bares her sable brow.  
The snow is on the ground, love,  
And cold and keen the air is.  
I'm singing here to you, love;  
You're dreaming there in Paris.

But this is Nature's law, love,  
Though just it may not seem,  
That men should wake to sing,  
love,  
While maidens sleep and dream.  
Them care may not molest, love,  
Nor stir them from their slum-  
bers,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Though midnight find the swain,  
    love,  
Still halting o'er his numbers.

I watch the rosy dawn, love,  
    Come stealing up the east,  
While all things round rejoice,  
    love,  
That Night her reign has  
    ceased.

The lark will soon be heard, love,  
    And on his way be winging;  
When Nature's poets wake, love,  
    Why should a man be singing?

### COLUMBIAN ODE

#### I

FOUR hundred years ago a tangled  
    waste  
Lay sleeping on the west At-  
    lantic's side;  
Their devious ways the Old  
    World's millions traced  
Content, and loved, and la-  
    bored, dared and died,  
While students still believed the  
    charts they conned,  
And revelled in their thriftless  
    ignorance,  
Nor dreamed of other lands that  
    lay beyond  
Old Ocean's dense, indefinite  
    expanse.

#### II

But deep within her heart old Na-  
    ture knew  
That she had once arrayed, at  
    Earth's behest,  
Another offspring, fine and fair  
    to view,—  
The chosen suckling of the  
    mother's breast.  
The child was wrapped in vest-  
    ments soft and fine,  
Each fold a work of Nature's  
    matchless art;  
The mother looked on it with love  
    divine,  
And strained the loved one  
    closely to her heart.  
And there it lay, and with the  
    warmth grew strong  
And hearty, by the salt sea  
    breezes fanned,  
Till Time with mellowing touches  
    passed along,  
And changed the infant to a  
    mighty land.

#### III

But men knew naught of this, till  
    there arose  
That mighty mariner, the  
    Genoese,  
Who dared to try, in spite of fears  
    and foes,  
The unknown fortunes of un-  
    sounded seas.  
O noblest of Italia's sons, thy  
    bark

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Went not alone into that shroud-  
ing night!

O dauntless darer of the rayless  
dark,

The world sailed with thee to  
eternal light!

The deer-haunts that with game  
were crowded then

To-day are tilled and cultivated  
lands;

The schoolhouse tow'rs where  
Bruin had his den,

And where the wigwam stood  
the chapel stands;

The place that nurtured men of  
savage mien

Now teems with men of Na-  
ture's noblest types;

Where moved the forest-foliage  
banner green,

Now flutters in the breeze the  
stars and stripes!

### A BORDER BALLAD

OH, I have n't got long to live, for  
we all

Die soon, e'en those who live  
longest;

And the poorest and weakest are  
taking their chance

Along with the richest and  
strongest.

So it's heigho for a glass and a  
song,

And a bright eye over the table,

And a dog for the hunt when the  
game is flush,

And the pick of a gentleman's  
stable.

There is Dimmock o' Dune, he  
was here yester-night,

But he's rotting to-day on Glen  
Arragh;

'T was the hand o' MacPherson  
that gave him the blow,

And the vultures shall feast on  
his marrow.

But it's heigho for a brave old  
song

And a glass while we are able;

Here's a health to death and an-  
other cup

To the bright eye over the table.

I can show a broad back and a  
jolly deep chest,

But who argues now on ap-  
pearance?

A blow or a thrust or a stumble  
at best

May send me to-day to my  
clearance.

Then it's heigho for the things I  
love,

My mother'll be soon wearing  
sable,

But give me my horse and my dog  
and my glass,

And a bright eye over the table.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

### AN EASY-GOIN' FELLER

THER' ain't no use in all this  
    strife,  
An' hurryin', pell-mell, right thro'  
    life.  
I don't believe in goin' too fast  
To see what kind o' road you 've  
    passed.  
It ain't no mortal kind o' good,  
'N' I would n't hurry ef I could.  
I like to jest go joggin' 'long,  
To limber up my soul with song;  
To stop awhile 'n' chat the men,  
'N' drink some cider now an'  
    then.  
Do' want no boss a-standin' by  
To see me work; I allus try  
To do my dooty right straight up,  
An' earn what fills my plate an'  
    cup.  
An' ez fur boss, I'll be my own,  
I like to jest be let alone,  
To plough my strip an' tend my  
    bees,  
An' do jest like I doggoned please.  
My head's all right, an' my  
    heart's meller,  
But I'm a easy-goin' feller.

### A NEGRO LOVE SONG

SEEN my lady home las' night,  
Jump back, honey, jump back.  
Hel' huh han' an' sque'z it tight,  
Jump back, honey, jump back.  
Hyeahd huh sigh a little sigh,

Seen a light gleam f'om huh eye,  
An' a smile go flittin' by —  
Jump back, honey, jump back.

Hyeahd de win' blow thoo de  
    pine,  
Jump back, honey, jump back.  
Mockin'-bird was singin' fine,  
Jump back, honey, jump back.  
An' my hea't was beatin' so,  
When I reached my lady's do',  
Dat I could n't ba' to go —  
Jump back, honey, jump back.

Put my ahm aroun' huh wais',  
Jump back, honey, jump back.  
Raised huh lips an' took a tase,  
Jump back, honey, jump back.  
Love me, honey, love me true?  
Love me well ez I love you?  
An' she answe'd, "'Cose I do" —  
Jump back, honey, jump back.

### THE DILETTANTE: A MODERN TYPE

HE scribbles some in prose and  
    verse,  
And now and then he prints it;  
He paints a little,— gathers some  
Of Nature's gold and mints it.

He plays a little, sings a song,  
Acts tragic rôles, or funny;  
He does, because his love is strong.  
But not, oh, not for money!

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

He studies almost everything  
From social art to science;  
A thirsty mind, a flowing spring,  
Demand and swift compliance.

He looms above the sordid  
crowd —  
At least through friendly lenses;  
While his mamma looks pleased  
and proud,  
And kindly pays expenses.

### BY THE STREAM

By the stream I dream in calm  
delight, and watch as in a  
glass,

How the clouds like crowds of  
snowy-hued and white-robed  
maidens pass,

And the water into ripples breaks  
and sparkles as it spreads,  
Like a host of armored knights  
with silver helmets on their  
heads.

And I deem the stream an emblem  
fit of human life may go,

For I find a mind may sparkle  
much and yet but shallows  
show,

And a soul may glow with myriad  
lights and wondrous mys-  
teries,

When it only lies a dormant thing  
and mirrors what it sees.

### THE COLORED SOLDIERS

If the muse were mine to tempt it  
And my feeble voice were  
strong,

If my tongue were trained to  
measures,

I would sing a stirring song.

I would sing a song heroic

Of those noble sons of Ham,

Of the gallant colored soldiers

Who fought for Uncle Sam!

In the early days you scorned  
them,

And with many a flip and flout  
Said "These battles are the white  
man's,

And the whites will fight them  
out."

Up the hills you fought and fal-  
tered,

In the vales you strove and bled,  
While your ears still heard the  
thunder

Of the foes' advancing tread.

Then distress fell on the nation,

And the flag was drooping low;  
Should the dust pollute your ban-  
ner?

No! the nation shouted, No!

So when War, in savage triumph,  
Spread abroad his funeral  
pall —

Then you called the colored sol-  
diers,

And they answered to your call.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

And like hounds unleashed and  
eager

For the life blood of the prey,  
Sprung they forth and bore them  
bravely

In the thickest of the fray.  
And where'er the fight was hot-  
test,

Where the bullets fastest fell,  
There they pressed unblanched  
and fearless

At the very mouth of hell.

Ah, they rallied to the standard  
To uphold it by their might;  
None were stronger in the labors,  
None were braver in the fight.  
From the blazing breach of Wag-  
ner

To the plains of Olustee,  
They were foremost in the fight  
Of the battles of the free.

And at Pillow! God have mercy  
On the deeds committed there,  
And the souls of those poor vic-  
tims

Sent to Thee without a prayer.  
Let the fulness of Thy pity  
O'er the hot wrought spirits  
sway

Of the gallant colored soldiers  
Who fell fighting on that day!

Yes, the Blacks enjoy their free-  
dom,

And they won it dearly, too;

For the life blood of their thou-  
sands

Did the southern fields bedew.  
In the darkness of their bondage,  
In the depths of slavery's night,  
Their muskets flashed the dawn-  
ing,

And they fought their way to  
light.

They were comrades then and  
brothers,

Are they more or less to-day?  
They were good to stop a bullet  
And to front the fearful fray.  
They were citizens and soldiers,  
When rebellion raised its head;  
And the traits that made them  
worthy, —

Ah ! those virtues are not dead.

They have shared your nightly  
vigils,

They have shared your daily  
toil ;  
And their blood with yours com-  
mingling  
Has enriched the Southern soil.

They have slept and marched and  
suffered

'Neath the same dark skies as  
you,

They have met as fierce a foe-  
man,

And have been as brave and  
true.



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

And their deeds shall find a record  
In the registry of Fame;  
For their blood has cleansed completely  
Every blot of Slavery's shame.  
So all honor and all glory  
To those noble sons of Ham—  
The gallant colored soldiers  
Who fought for Uncle Sam!

### NATURE AND ART

TO MY FRIEND CHARLES BOOTH  
NETTLETON

#### I

THE young queen Nature, ever  
sweet and fair,  
Once on a time fell upon evil  
days.  
From hearing oft herself dis-  
cussed with praise,  
There grew within her heart the  
longing rare  
To see herself; and every passing  
air  
The warm desire fanned into  
lusty blaze.  
Full oft she sought this end by  
devious ways,  
But sought in vain, so fell she in  
despair.  
For none within her train nor by  
her side  
Could solve the task or give the  
envied boon.  
So day and night, beneath the  
sun and moon,

She wandered to and fro unsatis-  
fied,  
Till Art came by, a blithe in-  
ventive elf,  
And made a glass wherein she  
saw herself.

#### II

Enrapt, the queen gazed on her  
glorious self,  
Then trembling with the thrill  
of sudden thought,  
Commanded that the skilful  
wight be brought  
That she might dower him with  
lands and pelf.  
Then out upon the silent sea-lapt  
shelf  
And up the hills and on  
downs they sought  
Him who so well and won-  
drously had wrought;  
And with much search found and  
brought home the elf.  
But he put by all gifts with sad  
replies,  
And from his lips these words  
flowed forth like wine:  
"O queen, I want no gift but  
thee," he said.  
She heard and looked on him with  
love-lit eyes,  
Gave him her hand, low murmur-  
ing, "I am thine,"  
And at the morrow's dawning  
they were wed.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

### AFTER WHILE

#### A POEM OF FAITH

I THINK that though the clouds  
be dark,  
That though the waves dash o'er  
the bark,  
Yet after while the light will  
come,  
And in calm waters safe at home  
The bark will anchor.  
Weep not, my sad-eyed, gray-  
robed maid,  
Because your fairest blossoms  
fade,  
That sorrow still o'erruns your  
cup,  
And even though you root them  
up,  
The weeds grow ranker.

For after while your tears shall  
cease,  
And sorrow shall give way to  
peace;  
The flowers shall bloom, the  
weeds shall die,  
And in that faith seen, by and by  
Thy woes shall perish.  
Smile at old Fortune's adverse  
tide,  
Smile when the scoffers sneer and  
chide.  
Oh, not for you the gems that  
pale,  
And not for you the flowers that  
fail;  
Let this thought cherish:

That after while the clouds will  
part,  
And then with joy the waiting  
heart  
Shall feel the light come stealing  
in,  
That drives away the cloud of sin  
And breaks its power.  
And you shall burst your chrysa-  
lis,  
And wing away to realms of  
bliss,  
Untrammelled, pure, divinely  
free,  
Above all earth's anxiety  
From that same hour.

### THE OL' TUNES

You kin talk about yer anthems  
An' yer arias an' sich,  
An' yer modern choir-singin'  
That you think so awful rich;  
But you orter heerd us youngsters  
In the times now far away,  
A-singin' o' the ol' tunes  
In the ol'-fashioned way.  
There was some of us sung treble  
An' a few of us growled bass,  
An' the tide o' song flowed  
smoothly  
With its 'comp'niment o' grace;  
There was spirit in that music,  
An' a kind o' solemn sway,  
A-singin' o' the ol' tunes  
In the ol'-fashioned way.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

I remember oft o' standin'  
In my homespun pantaloons —  
On my face the bronze an' freckles  
O' the suns o' youthful Junes —  
Thinkin' that no mortal minstrel  
Ever chanted sich a lay  
As the ol' tunes we was singin'  
In the ol'-fashioned way.

The boys 'ud always lead us,  
An' the girls 'ud all chime in  
Till the sweetness o' the singin'  
Robbed the list'nin' soul o' sin;  
An' I used to tell the parson  
'T was as good to sing as pray,  
When the people sung the ol'  
tunes  
In the ol'-fashioned way.

How I long ag'in to hear 'em  
Pourin' forth from soul to soul,  
With the treble high an' meller,  
An' the bass's mighty roll;  
But the times is very diff'rent,  
An' the music heerd to-day  
Ain't the singin' o' the ol' tunes  
In the ol'-fashioned way.

Little screechin' by a woman,  
Little squawkin' by a man,  
Then the organ's twiddle-twaddle,  
Jest the empty space to span, —  
An' ef you should even think it,  
'T is n't proper fur to say  
That you want to hear the ol'  
tunes  
In the ol'-fashioned way.

But I think that some bright  
mornin',  
When the toils of life air o'er,  
An' the sun o' heaven arisin'  
Glads with light the happy  
shore,  
I shall hear the angel chorus,  
In the realms of endless day,  
A-singin' o' the ol' tunes  
In the ol'-fashioned way.

### MELANCHOLIA

SILENTLY without my window,  
Tapping gently at the pane,  
Falls the rain.  
Through the trees sighs the breeze  
Like a soul in pain.  
Here alone I sit and weep;  
Thought hath banished sleep.  
Wearily I sit and listen  
To the water's ceaseless drip.  
To my lip  
Fate turns up the bitter cup,  
Forcing me to sip;  
'T is a bitter, bitter drink,  
Thus I sit and think, —

Thinking things unknown and  
awful,  
Thoughts on wild, uncanny  
themes,  
Waking dreams.  
Spectres dark, corpses stark,  
Show the gaping seams  
Whence the cold and cruel knife  
Stole away their life.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Bloodshot eyes all strained and  
staring,

Gazing ghastly into mine;

Blood like wine

On the brow — clotted now—

Shows death's dreadful sign.

Lonely vigil still I keep;

Would that I might sleep!

Still, oh, still, my brain is whirl-  
ing!

Still runs on my stream of  
thought;

I am caught,

In the net fate hath set.

Mind and soul are brought

To destruction's very brink;

Yet I can but think!

Eyes that look into the future,—

Peeping forth from out my  
mind,

They will find

Some new weight, soon or late,

On my soul to bind,

Crushing all its courage out,—

Heavier than doubt.

Dawn, the Eastern monarch's  
daughter,

Rising from her dewy bed,

Lays her head

Gainst the clouds' sombre  
shrouds

Now half fringed with red.

O'er the land she 'gins to peep;

Come, O gentle Sleep!

Hark! the morning cock is crow-  
ing;

Dreams, like ghosts, must hie  
away;

'Tis the day.

Rosy morn now is born;

Dark thoughts may not stay.

Day my brain from foes will keep;

Now, my soul, I sleep.

### THE WOOING

A YOUTH went faring-up and  
down,

Alack and well-a-day.

He fared him to the market town,

Alack and well-a-day.

And there he met a maiden fair,

With hazel eyes and auburn hair;

His heart went from him then and  
there,

Alack and well-a-day.

She posies sold right merrily,

Alack and well-a-day;

But not a flower was fair as she,

Alack and well-a-day.

He bought a rose and sighed a  
sigh,

"Ah, dearest maiden, would that I  
Might dare the seller too to buy!"

Alack and well-a-day.

She tossed her head, the coy co-  
quette,

Alack and well-a-day.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

"I'm not, sir, in the market yet,"  
Alack and well-a-day.  
"Your love must cool upon a  
shelf;  
Tho' much I sell for gold and  
pelf,  
I'm yet too young to sell myself,"  
Alack and well-a-day.

The youth was filled with sorrow  
sore,  
Alack and well-a-day.  
And looked he at the maid once  
more,  
Alack and well-a-day.  
Then loud he cried, "Fair maid-  
en, if  
Too young to sell, now as I live,  
You're not too young yourself to  
give,"  
Alack and well-a-day.

The little maid cast down her  
eyes,  
Alack and well-a-day.  
And many a flush began to rise,  
Alack and well-a-day.  
"Why, since you are so bold," she  
said,  
"I doubt not you are highly bred,  
So take me!" and the twain were  
wed,  
Alack and well-a-day.

### MERRY AUTUMN

It's all a farce,—these tales they  
tell  
About the breezes sighing,  
And moans astir o'er field and  
dell,  
Because the year is dying.

Such principles are most absurd,—  
I care not who first taught  
'em;  
There's nothing known to beast  
or bird  
To make a solemn autumn.

In solemn times, when grief holds  
sway  
With countenance distressing,  
You'll note the more of black and  
gray  
Will then be used in dressing.

Now purple tints are all around;  
The sky is blue and mellow;  
And e'en the grasses turn the  
ground  
From modest green to yellow.

The seed burrs all with laughter  
crack  
On featherweed and jimson;  
And leaves that should be dressed  
in black  
Are all decked out in crimson.

A butterfly goes winging by;  
A singing bird comes after;

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

And Nature, all from earth to  
sky,  
Is bubbling o'er with laughter.

The ripples wimple on the rills,  
Like sparkling little lasses;  
The sunlight runs along the hills,  
And laughs among the grasses.

The earth is just so full of fun  
It really can't contain it;  
And streams of mirth so freely  
run  
The heavens seem to rain it.

Don't talk to me of solemn days  
In autumn's time of splendor,  
Because the sun shows fewer rays,  
And these grow slant and slender.

Why, it's the climax of the  
year, —  
The highest time of living! —  
Till naturally its bursting cheer  
Just melts into thanksgiving.

### WHEN DE CO'N PONE'S HOT

DEY is times in life when Nature  
Seems to slip a cog an' go,  
Jes' a-rattlin' down creation,  
Lak an ocean's overflow;  
When de worl' jes' stahts a-spin-  
nin'  
Lak a picaninny's top,

An' yo' cup o' joy is brimmin'  
'Twell it seems about to slop,  
An' you feel jes' lak a racah,  
Dat is trainin' fu' to trot —  
When yo' mammy says de blessin'  
An' de co'n pone's hot.

When you set down at de table,  
Kin' o' weary lak an' sad,  
An' you'se jes' a little tiahed  
An' purhaps a little mad;  
How yo' gloom tu'ns into glad-  
ness,  
How yo' joy drives out de  
doubt

When de oven do' is opened,  
An' de smell comes po'in' out;  
Why, de 'lectric light o' Heaven  
Seems to settle on de spot,  
When yo' mammy says de blessin'  
An' de co'n pone's hot.

When de cabbage pot is steamin'  
An' de bacon good an' fat,  
When de chittlins is a-sputter'n'  
So's to show you whah dey's  
at;

Tek away yo' sody biscuit,  
Tek away yo' cake an' pie,  
Fu' de glory time is comin',  
An' it's 'proachin' mighty  
nigh,  
An' you want to jump an' hollah,  
Dough you know you'd bettah  
not,

When yo' mammy says de blessin'  
An' de co'n pone's hot.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

I have hyeahd o' lots o' sermons,  
 An' I've hyeahd o' lots o'  
     prayers,  
 An' I've listened to some singin'  
     Dat has tuck me up de stairs  
 Of de Glory-Lan' an' set me  
     Jes' below de Mastah's th'one,  
 An' have lef' my hea't a-singin'  
     In a happy aftah tone;  
 But dem wu'ds so sweetly mur-  
     mured  
     Seem to tech de softes' spot,  
 When my mammy says de blessin',  
     An' de co'n pone's hot.

### BALLAD

I KNOW my love is true,  
     And oh the day is fair.  
 The sky is clear and blue,  
 The flowers are rich of hue,  
     The air I breathe is rare,  
     I have no grief or care;  
 For my own love is true,  
     And oh the day is fair.

My love is false I find,  
     And oh the day is dark.  
 Blows sadly down the wind,  
 While sorrow holds my mind;  
     I do not hear the lark,  
     For quenched is life's dear  
     spark,—  
 My love is false I find,  
     And oh the day is dark!

For love doth make the day  
     Or dark or doubly bright;  
 Her beams along the way  
 Dispel the gloom and gray.  
     She lives and all is bright,  
     She dies and life is night.  
 For love doth make the day,  
     Or dark or doubly bright.

### THE CHANGE HAS COME

THE change has come, and Helen  
     sleeps —  
 Not sleeps; but wakes to greater  
     deeps  
     Of wisdom, glory, truth, and  
     light,  
 Than ever blessed her seeking  
     sight,  
 In this low, long, lethargic  
     night,  
     Worn out with strife  
     Which men call life.

The change has come, and who  
     would say  
 "I would it were not come to  
     day"?  
     What were the respite till to-  
     morrow?  
     Postponement of a certain sor-  
     row,  
     From which each passing day  
     would borrow!  
     Let grief be dumb,  
     The change has come.



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

### COMPARISON

THE sky of brightest gray seems  
dark

To one whose sky was ever  
white.

To one who never knew a spark,  
Thro' all his life, of love or  
light,

The grayest cloud seems over-  
bright.

The robin sounds a beggar's note  
Where one the nightingale has  
heard,

But he for whom no silver throat  
Its liquid music ever stirred,  
Deems robin still the sweetest  
bird.

### A CORN-SONG

ON the wide veranda white,  
In the purple failing light,  
Sits the master while the sun is  
lowly burning;

And his dreamy thoughts are  
drowned

In the softly flowing sound  
Of the corn-songs of the field-  
hands slow returning.

Oh, we hoe de co'n  
Since de ehly mo'n;  
Now de sinkin' sun  
Says de day is done.

O'er the fields with heavy tread,  
Light of heart and high of head,

Though the halting steps be la-  
bored, slow, and weary;

Still the spirits brave and strong  
Find a comforter in song,  
And their corn-song rises ever  
loud and cheery.

Oh, we hoe de co'n  
Since de ehly mo'n;  
Now de sinkin' sun  
Says de day is done.

To the master in his seat,  
Comes the burden, full and sweet,  
Of the mellow minor music grow-  
ing clearer,

As the toilers raise the hymn,  
Thro' the silence dusk and dim,  
To the cabin's restful shelter  
drawing nearer.

Oh, we hoe de co'n  
Since de ehly mo'n;  
Now de sinkin' sun  
Says de day is done.

And a tear is in the eye  
Of the master sitting by,  
As he listens to the echoes low-  
replying

To the music's fading calls  
As it faints away and falls  
Into silence, deep within the cabin  
dying.

Oh, we hoe de co'n  
Since de ehly mo'n;  
Now de sinkin' sun  
Says de day is done.

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

## DISCOVERED

SEEN you down at chu'ch las'  
night,

Nevah min', Miss Lucy.

What I mean? oh, dat 's all right,

Nevah min', Miss Lucy.

You was sma't ez sma't could be,

But you could n't hide f'om me.

Ain't I got two eyes to see!

Nevah min', Miss Lucy.

Guess you thought you 's awful  
keen;

Nevah min', Miss Lucy.

Evahthing you done, I seen;

Nevah min', Miss Lucy.

Seen him tek yo' ahm jes' so,

When he got outside de do' —

Oh, I know dat man 's yo' beau!

Nevah min', Miss Lucy.

Say now, honey, wha 'd he say? —

Nevah min', Miss Lucy!

Keep yo' secrets — dat 's yo'  
way —

Nevah min', Miss Lucy.

Won't tell me an' I'm yo' pal —

I'm gwine tell his othah gal, —

Know huh, too, huh name is Sal;

Nevah min', Miss Lucy!

## DISAPPOINTED

AN old man planted and dug and  
tended,

Toiling in joy from dew to  
dew;

The sun was kind, and the rain  
befriended;

Fine grew his orchard and fair  
to view.

Then he said: "I will quiet my  
thrifty fears,

For here is fruit for my failing  
years."

But even then the storm-clouds  
gathered,

Swallowing up the azure sky;

The sweeping winds into white  
foam lathered

The placid breast of the bay,  
hard by;

Then the spirits that raged in the  
darkened air

Swept o'er his orchard and left it  
bare.

The old man stood in the rain, un-  
caring,

Viewing the place the storm had  
swept;

And then with a cry from his soul  
despairing,

He bowed him down to the  
earth and wept.

But a voice cried aloud from the  
driving rain;

"Arise, old man, and plant  
again!"

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

### INVITATION TO LOVE

COME when the nights are bright  
with stars

Or when the moon is mellow;  
Come when the sun his golden  
bars

Drops on the hay-field yellow.  
Come in the twilight soft and  
gray,

Come in the night or come in the  
day,

Come, O love, whene'er you may,  
And you are welcome, welcome.

You are sweet, O Love, dear  
Love,

You are soft as the nesting dove.  
Come to my heart and bring it rest  
As the bird flies home to its wel-  
come nest.

Come when my heart is full of  
grief

Or when my heart is merry;  
Come with the falling of the leaf  
Or with the redd'ning cherry.

Come when the year's first blos-  
som blows,

Come when the summer gleams  
and glows,

Come with the winter's drifting  
snows,

And you are welcome, welcome.

### HE HAD HIS DREAM

HE had his dream, and all  
through life,

Worked up to it through toil and  
strife.

Afloat fore'er before his eyes,  
It colored for him all his skies:

The storm-cloud dark  
Above his bark,

The calm and listless vault of blue  
Took on its hopeful hue,

It tintured every passing beam —  
He had his dream.

He labored hard and failed at last,  
His sails too weak to bear the  
blast,

The raging tempests tore away  
And sent his beating bark astray.  
But what cared he  
For wind or sea!

He said, "The tempest will be  
short,

My bark will come to port."  
He saw through every cloud a  
gleam —

He had his dream.

### GOOD-NIGHT

THE lark is silent in his nest,  
The breeze is sighing in its  
flight,

Sleep, Love, and peaceful be thy  
rest.

Good-night, my love, good-  
night, good-night.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Sweet dreams attend thee in thy  
sleep,  
To soothe thy rest till morn-  
ing's light,  
And angels round thee vigil keep.  
Good-night, my love, good-  
night, good-night.

Sleep well, my love, on night's  
dark breast,  
And ease thy soul with slumber  
bright;  
Be joy but thine and I am blest.  
Good-night, my love, good-  
night, good-night.

'T ain't no possum! Bless de  
Lamb!  
Yes, it is, you rascal, Sam!

Gin it to me; whut you say?  
Ain't you sma't now! Oh, go  
'way!  
Possum do look mighty nice,  
But you ax too big a price.

Tell me, is you talkin' true,  
Dat's de gal's whut ma'ies you?  
Come back, Sam; now whah's  
you gwine?  
Co'se you' knows dat possum's  
mine!

### A COQUETTE CON- QUERED

YES, my ha't 's ez ha'd ez stone —  
Go 'way, Sam, an' lemme 'lone.  
No; I ain't gwine change my  
min' —  
Ain't gwine ma'y you — nuffin' de  
kin'.

Phiny loves you true an' deah?  
Go ma'y Phiny; whut I keer?  
Oh, you need n't mou'n an' cry —  
I don't keer how soon you die.

Got a present! Whut you got?  
Somef'n fu' de pan er pot!  
Huh! yo' sass do sholy beat —  
Think I don't git 'nough to eat?

Whut's dat un'neaf yo' coat?  
Looks des lak a little shoat.

### NORA: A SERENADE

AH, Nora, my Nora, the light  
fades away,  
While Night like a spirit steals  
up o'er the hills;  
The thrush from his tree where he  
chanted all day,  
No longer his music in ecstasy  
trills.  
Then, Nora, be near me; thy pres-  
ence doth cheer me,  
Thine eye hath a gleam that is  
truer than gold.

I cannot but love thee; so do not  
reprove me,  
If the strength of my passion  
should make me too bold.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Nora, pride of my heart —  
Rosy cheeks, cherry lips, sparkling with glee,—  
Wake from thy slumbers, wherever thou art;  
Wake from thy slumbers to me.

Ah, Nora, my Nora, there's love in the air,—  
It stirs in the numbers that thrill in my brain;  
Oh, sweet, sweet is love with its mingling of care,  
Though joy travels only a step before pain.  
Be roused from thy slumbers and list to my numbers;  
My heart is poured out in this song unto thee.  
Oh, be thou not cruel, thou treasure, thou jewel;  
Turn thine ear to my pleading and hearken to me.

### OCTOBER

OCTOBER is the treasurer of the year,  
And all the months pay bounty to her store;  
The fields and orchards still their tribute bear,  
And fill her brimming coffers more and more.  
But she, with youthful lavishness,

Spends all her wealth in gaudy dress,  
And decks herself in garments bold  
Of scarlet, purple, red, and gold.

She heedeth not how swift the hours fly,  
But smiles and sings her happy life along;  
She only sees above a shining sky;  
She only hears the breezes' voice in song.  
Her garments trail the woodlands through,  
And gather pearls of early dew  
That sparkle, till the roguish Sun  
Creeps up and steals them every one.

But what cares she that jewels should be lost,  
When all of Nature's bounteous wealth is hers?  
Though princely fortunes may have been their cost,  
Not one regret her calm demeanor stirs.  
Whole-hearted, happy, careless, free,  
She lives her life out joyously,  
Nor cares when Frost stalks o'er her way  
And turns her auburn locks to gray.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

### A SUMMER'S NIGHT

THE night is dewy as a maiden's  
mouth,  
The skies are bright as are a  
maiden's eyes,  
Soft as a maiden's breath the  
wind that flies  
Up from the perfumed bosom of  
the South.  
Like sentinels, the pines stand in  
the park;  
And hither hastening, like rakes  
that roam,  
With lamps to light their way-  
ward footsteps home,  
The fireflies come staggr'ing down  
the dark.

### SHIPS THAT PASS IN THE NIGHT

OUT in the sky the great dark  
clouds are massing;  
I look far out into the pregnant  
night,  
Where I can hear a solemn boom-  
ing gun  
And catch the gleaming of a  
random light,  
That tells me that the ship I seek  
is passing, passing.  
My tearful eyes my soul's deep  
hurt are glassing;  
For I would hail and check that  
ship of ships.

I stretch my hands imploring, c  
aloud,  
My voice falls dead a foot fro  
mine own lips,  
And but its ghost doth reach th  
vessel, passing, passing.

O Earth, O Sky, O Ocean, bo  
surpassing,  
O heart of mine, O soul th  
dreads the dark!  
Is there no hope for me? Is the  
no way  
That I may sight and check th  
speeding bark  
Which out of sight and sound  
passing, passing?

### THE DELINQUENT

Goo'-BY, Jinks, I got to hump,  
Got to mek dis pony jump;  
See dat sun a-goin' down  
'N' me a-foolin' hyeah in town!  
Git up, Suke — go long!

Guess Mirandy 'll think I's tigh  
Me not home an' comin' on nigh  
What's dat stan'in' by de fence  
Pshaw! why don't I lu'n son  
sense?

Git up, Suke — go long!

Guess I spent down dah at Jink  
Mos' a dollah fur de drinks.  
Bless yo'r soul, you see dat star  
Lawd, but won't Mirandy rar?  
Git up, Suke — go long!

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

ent dis mo'nin', hyeah it 's night,  
h 's de cabin dah in sight.  
ho 's dat stan'in' in de do'?  
t must be Mirandy, sho',  
Git up, Suke — go long!

t de close-stick in huh han',  
t look funny, goodness lan',  
res alibe, but she look glum!  
eah, Mirandy, hyeah I come!  
Git up, Suke — go long!

Ef 't had n't a' b'en fur you, you  
w ole fool, I'd a' be'n home  
g fo' now!

### DAWN

angel, robed in spotless white,  
at down and kissed the sleeping  
Night.  
ght woke to blush; the sprite  
was gone.  
n saw the blush and called it  
Dawn.

### A DROWSY DAY

air is dark, the sky is gray,  
The misty shadows come and  
go,  
d here within my dusky room  
h chair looks ghostly in the  
gloom.  
Outside the rain falls cold and  
slow —

Half-stinging drops, half-blinding  
spray.

Each slightest sound is magnified,  
For drowsy quiet holds her  
reign;

The burnt stick in the fireplace  
breaks,

The nodding cat with start  
awakes,

And then to sleep drops off  
again,

Unheeding Towser at her side.

I look far out across the lawn,  
Where huddled stand the silly  
sheep;

My work lies idle at my hands,  
My thoughts fly out like scattered  
strands

Of thread, and on the verge of  
sleep —

Still half awake — I dream and  
yawn.

What spirits rise before my eyes!  
How various of kind and form!  
Sweet memories of days long past,  
The dreams of youth that could  
not last,

Each smiling calm, each raging  
storm,

That swept across my early skies.

Half seen, the bare, gaunt-fingered  
boughs

Before my window sweep and  
sway,

And chafe in tortures of unrest.



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

My chin sinks down upon my  
breast;

I cannot work on such a day,  
But only sit and dream and  
drowse.

### DIRGE

PLACE this bunch of mignonette  
In her cold, dead hand;  
When the golden sun is set,  
Where the poplars stand,  
Bury her from sun and day,  
Lay my little love away  
From my sight.

She was like a modest flower  
Blown in sunny June,  
Warm as sun at noon's high hour,  
Chaster than the moon.  
Ah, her day was brief and bright,  
Earth has lost a star of light;  
She is dead.

Softly breathe her name to me,—  
Ah, I loved her so.  
Gentle let your tribute be;  
None may better know  
Her true worth than I who weep  
O'er her as she lies asleep —  
Soft asleep.

Lay these lilies on her breast,  
They are not more white  
Than the soul of her, at rest  
'Neath their petals bright.  
Chant your aves soft and low,

Solemn be your tread and slow,  
She is dead.

Lay her here beneath the grass  
Cool and green and sweet,  
Where the gentle brook may pa  
Crooning at her feet.  
Nature's bards shall come a  
sing,

And the fairest flowers shall spr  
Where she lies.

Safe above the water's swirl,  
She has crossed the bar;  
Earth has lost a precious pearl,  
Heaven has gained a star,  
That shall ever sing and shine,  
Till it quells this grief of mine  
For my love.

### HYMN

WHEN storms arise  
And dark'ning skies  
About me threat'ning lower,  
To thee, O Lord, I raise m  
eyes,  
To thee my tortured spirit flies  
For solace in that hour.

The mighty arm  
Will let no harm  
Come near me nor befall me  
Thy voice shall quiet my alarm  
When life's great battle wax  
warm —  
No foeman shall appall me.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Upon thy breast  
Secure I rest,  
From sorrow and vexation;  
No more by sinful cares oppressed,  
But in thy presence ever blest,  
O God of my salvation.

### PREPARATION

THE little bird sits in the nest and  
sings  
A shy, soft song to the morning  
light;  
And it flutters a little and prunes  
its wings.  
The song is halting and poor  
and brief,  
And the fluttering wings scarce  
stir a leaf;  
But the note is a prelude to  
sweeter things,  
And the busy bill and the flutter  
slight  
Are proving the wings for a  
bolder flight!

### THE DESERTED PLAN- TATION

OH, de grubbin'-hoe 's a-rustin' in  
de co'nah,  
An' de plow 's a-tumblin' down  
in de fiel',  
While de whippo'will 's a-wailin'  
lak a mou'nah  
When his stubbo'n hea't is try-  
in' ha'd to yiel'.

In de furrers whah de co'n was  
allus wavin',  
Now de weeds is growin' green  
an' rank an' tall;  
An' de swallers roun' de whole  
place is a-bravin'  
Lak dey thought deir folks had  
allus owned it all.

An' de big house stan's all quiet  
lak an' solemn,  
Not a blessed soul in pa'lor,  
po'ch, er lawn;  
Not a guest, ner not a ca'iage lef'  
to haul 'em,  
Fu' de ones dat tu'ned de latch-  
string out air gone.  
An' de banjo's voice is silent in de  
qua'ters,  
D' ain't a hymn ner co'n-song  
ringin' in de air;  
But de murmur of a branch's pass-  
in' waters  
Is de only soun' dat breks 'de  
stillness dere.

Whah 's de da'kies, dem dat used  
to be a-dancin'  
Evry night befo' de ole cabin  
do'?  
Whah 's de chillun, dem dat used  
to be a-prancin'  
Er a-rollin' in de san' er on de  
flo'?

Whah 's ole Uncle Mordecai an'  
Uncle Aaron?

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Whah 's Aunt Doshy, Sam, an'  
Kit, an' all de res'?

Whah 's ole Tom de da'ky fiddlah,  
how 's he farin'?

Whah 's de gals dat used to sing  
an' dance de bes'?

Gone! not one o' dem is lef' to tell  
de story;

Dey have lef' de deah ole place  
to fall away.

Could n't one o' dem dat seed it in  
its glory

Stay to watch it in de hour of  
decay?

Dey have lef' de ole plantation to  
de swallers,

But it hol's in me a lover till de  
las';

Fu' I fin' hyeah in de memory dat  
follers

All dat loved me an' dat I loved  
in de pas'.

So I 'll stay an' watch de deah ole  
place an' tend it

Ez I used to in de happy days  
gone by.

'Twell de othah Mastah thinks  
it's time to end it,

An' calls me to my qua'ters in  
de sky.

## THE SECRET

WHAT says the wind to the wav-  
ing trees?

What says the wave to the  
river?

What means the sigh in the passing  
breeze?

Why do the rushes quiver?

Have you not heard the fainting  
cry

Of the flowers that said "Good-  
bye, good-bye"?

List how the gray dove moans and  
grieves

Under the woodland cover;

List to the drift of the falling  
leaves,

List to the wail of the lover.

Have you not caught the message  
heard

Already by wave and breeze and  
bird?

Come, come away to the river's  
bank,

Come in the early morning;

Come when the grass with dew is  
dank,

There you will find the warn-  
ing—

A hint in the kiss of the quicken-  
ing air

Of the secret that birds and  
breezes bear.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

### THE WIND AND THE SEA

I stood by the shore at the death  
of day,

As the sun sank flaming red;  
And the face of the waters that  
spread away

Was as gray as the face of the  
dead.

And I heard the cry of the wan-  
ton sea

And the moan of the wailing  
wind;

For love's sweet pain in his heart  
had he,

But the gray old sea had sinned.

The wind was young and the sea  
was old,

But their cries went up to-  
gether;

The wind was warm and the sea  
was cold,

For age makes wintry weather.

So they cried aloud and they wept  
amain,

Till the sky grew dark to hear  
it;

And out of its folds crept the misty  
rain,

In its shroud, like a troubled  
spirit.

For the wind was wild with a  
hopeless love,

And the sea was sad at heart

At many a crime that he wot of,  
Wherein he had played his part.

He thought of the gallant ships  
gone down

By the will of his wicked waves;  
And he thought how the church-  
yard in the town

Held the sea-made widows'  
graves.

The wild wind thought of the love  
he had left

Afar in an Eastern land,

And he longed, as long the much  
bereft,

For the touch of her perfumed  
hand.

In his winding wail and his deep-  
heaved sigh

His aching grief found vent;

While the sea looked up at the  
bending sky

And murmured: "I repent."

But e'en as he spoke, a ship came  
by,

That bravely ploughed the  
main,

And a light came into the sea's  
green eye,

And his heart grew hard again.

Then he spoke to the wind:  
"Friend, seest thou not

Yon vessel is eastward bound?

Pray speed with it to the happy  
spot

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Where thy loved one may be  
found."

And the wind rose up in a dear  
delight,

And after the good ship sped;  
But the crafty sea by his wicked  
might  
Kept the vessel ever ahead.

Till the wind grew fierce in his  
despair,

And white on the brow and lip.  
He tore his garments and tore his  
hair,  
And fell on the flying ship.

And the ship went down, for a  
rock was there,  
And the sailless sea loomed  
black;

While burdened again with dole  
and care,  
The wind came moaning back.

And still he moans from his bosom  
hot

Where his raging grief lies pent,  
And ever when the ships come not,  
The sea says: "I repent."

### RIDING TO TOWN

WHEN labor is light and the  
morning is fair,  
I find it a pleasure beyond all  
compare

To hitch up my nag and go hur-  
rying down

And take Katie May for a ride  
into town;

For bumpety-bump goes the  
wagon,

But tra-la-la-la our lay.  
There's joy in a song as we rattle  
along

In the light of the glorious day.

A coach would be fine, but a  
spring wagon's good;

My jeans are a match for Kate's  
gingham and hood;

The hills take us up and the vales  
take us down,

But what matters that? we are  
riding to town,

And bumpety-bump goes the  
wagon,

But tra-la-la-la sing we.  
There's never a care may live in  
the air

That is filled with the breath  
of our glee.

And after we've started, there's  
naught can repress

The thrill of our hearts in their  
wild happiness;

The heavens may smile or the  
heavens may frown,

And it's all one to us when we're  
riding to town.

For bumpety-bump goes the  
wagon,

But tra-la-la-la we shout,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

For our hearts they are clear and  
there's nothing to fear,  
And we've never a pain nor a  
doubt.

The wagon is weak and the road-  
way is rough,  
And tho' it is long it is not long  
enough,  
For mid all my ecstasies this is the  
crown  
To sit beside Katie and ride into  
town,  
When bumpety-bump goes the  
wagon,  
But tra-la-la-la our song;  
And if I had my way, I'd be will-  
ing to pay  
If the road could be made twice  
as long.

### WE WEAR THE MASK

WE wear the mask that grins and  
lies,  
It hides our cheeks and shades our  
eyes,—  
This debt we pay to human guile;  
With torn and bleeding hearts we  
smile,  
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-  
wise,  
In counting all our tears and  
sighs?

Nay, let them only see us, while  
We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ,  
our cries

To thee from tortured souls arise.  
We sing, but oh the clay is vile  
Beneath our feet, and long the  
mile;

But let the world dream other-  
wise,  
We wear the mask!

### THE MEADOW LARK

THOUGH the winds be dank,  
And the sky be sober,  
And the grieving Day  
In a mantle gray  
Hath let her waiting maiden  
robe her,—  
All the fields along  
I can hear the song  
Of the meadow lark,  
As she flits and flutters,  
And laughs at the thunder  
when it mutters.  
O happy bird, of heart most  
gay  
To sing when skies are gray!

When the clouds are full,  
And the tempest master  
Lets the loud winds sweep  
From his bosom deep  
Like heralds of some dire disas-  
ter,

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Then the heart alone  
To itself makes moan;  
And the songs come slow,  
While the tears fall fleeter,  
And silence than song by far  
seems sweeter.  
Oh, few are they along the  
way  
Who sing when skies are  
gray!

### ONE LIFE

OH, I am hurt to death, my  
Love;  
The shafts of Fate have pierced  
my striving heart,  
And I am sick and weary of  
The endless pain and smart.  
My soul is weary of the strife,  
And chafes at life, and chafes at  
life.  
Time mocks me with fair prom-  
ises;  
A blooming future grows a bar-  
ren past,  
Like rain my fair full-blossomed  
trees  
Unburden in the blast.  
The harvest fails on grain and  
tree,  
Nor comes to me, nor comes to  
me.

The stream that bears my hopes  
abreast

Turns ever from my way its  
pregnant tide.  
My laden boat, torn from its rest,  
Drifts to the other side.  
So all my hopes are set astray,  
And drift away, and drift away.  
The lark sings to me at the morn,  
And near me wings her sky-  
ward-soaring flight;  
But pleasure dies as soon as born,  
The owl takes up the night,  
And night seems long and doubly  
dark;  
I miss the lark, I miss the lark.

Let others labor as they may,  
I'll sing and sigh alone, and  
write my line.  
Their fate is theirs, or grave or  
gay,  
And mine shall still be mine.  
I know the world holds joy and  
glee,  
But not for me,—'t is not for me.

### CHANGING TIME

THE cloud looked in at the win-  
dow,  
And said to the day, "Be dark!"  
And the roguish rain tapped hard  
on the pane,  
To stifle the song of the lark.

The wind sprang up in the tre-  
tops



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

And shrieked with a voice of  
death,

But the rough-voiced breeze, that  
shook the trees,

Was touched with a violet's  
breath.

### DEAD

A KNOCK is at her door, but she  
is weak;

Strange dewes have washed the  
paint streaks from her  
cheek;

She does not rise, but, ah, this  
friend is known,

And knows that he will find her  
all alone.

So opens he the door, and with  
soft tread

Goes straightway to the richly  
curtained bed.

His soft hand on her dewy head  
he lays.

A strange white light she gives  
him for his gaze.

Then, looking on the glory of her  
charms,

He crushes her resistless in his  
arms.

Stand back! look not upon this  
bold embrace,

Nor view the calmness of the  
wanton's face;

With joy unspeakable and 'bated  
breath,

She keeps her last, long liaison  
with death!

### A CONFIDENCE

UNCLE JOHN, he makes me tired;  
Thinks 'at he's jest so all-fired  
Smart, 'at he kin pick up, so,  
Ever'thing he wants to know.

Tried to ketch me up last night,  
But you bet I would n't bite.

I jest kep' the smoothes' face,  
But I led him sich a chase,  
Could n't corner me, you bet—

I skipped all the traps he set.

Makin' out he wan'ed to know

Who was this an' that girl's beau;

So 's he 'd find out, don't you see,

Who was goin' 'long with me.

But I answers jest ez sly,

An' I never winks my eye,

Tell he hollers with a whirl,

"Look here, ain't you got a girl?"

Y' ought 'o seen me spread my  
eyes,

Like he 'd took me by surprise,

An' I said, "Oh, Uncle John,

Never thought o' havin' one."

An' somehow that seemed to tickle

Him an' he shelled out a nickel.

Then you ought to seen me leave

Jest a-laffin' in my sleeve.

Fool him—well, I guess I did;

He ain't on to this here kid.

Got a girl! well, I guess yes,

Got a dozen more or less,

But I got one reely one,

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Not no foolin' ner no fun;  
 Fur I 'm sweet on her, you see,  
 An' I ruther guess 'at she  
 Must be kinder sweet on me,  
 So we're keepin' company.  
 Honest Injun! this is true,  
 Ever' word I 'm tellin' you!  
 But you won't be sich a scab  
 Ez to run aroun' an' blab.  
 Mebbe 't ain't the way with you,  
 But you know some fellers do.  
 Spoils a girl to let her know  
 'At you talk about her so.  
 Don't you know her? her name's  
     Liz,

Nicest girl in town she is.  
 Purty? ah, git out, you gilly —  
 Liz 'ud purt 'nigh knock you silly.  
 Y' ought 'o see her when she's  
     dressed

All up in her Sunday best,  
 All the fellers nudgin' me,  
 An' a-whisperin', gemunee!  
 Betcher life 'at I feel proud  
 When she passes by the crowd.  
 'T 's kinder nice to be a-goin'  
 With a girl 'at makes some show-  
     in'—

One you know 'at hain't no snide,  
 Makes you feel so satisfied.  
 An' I 'll tell you she 's a trump,  
 Never even seen her jump  
 Like some silly girls 'ud do,  
 When I 'd hide and holler "Boo!"  
 She 'd jest laff an' say "Git out!  
 What you hollerin' about?"  
 When some girls 'ud have a fit

'That 'un don't git skeered a bit  
 Never makes a bit o' row  
 When she sees a worm er cow.  
 Them kind 's few an' far between  
 Bravest girl I ever seen.  
 Tell you 'nuther thing she 'll do  
 Mebbe you won't think it 's true,  
 But if she 's jest got a dime  
 She 'll go halvers ever' time.  
 Ah, you goose, you need n't laff;  
 That 's the kinder girl to have.  
 If you knowed her like I do,  
 Guess you 'd kinder like her too.  
 Tell you somep'n' if you 'll swea  
 You won't tell it anywhere.  
 Oh, you got to cross yer heart  
 Earnest, truly, 'fore I start.  
 Well, one day I kissed her cheek  
 Gee, but I felt cheap an' weak,  
 'Cause at first she kinder flared,  
 'N', gracious goodness! I wa  
     scared.  
 But I need n't been, fer la!  
 Why, she never told her ma.  
 That 's what I call grit, don'  
     you?

Sich a girl 's worth stickin' to.

### PHYLLIS

PHYLLIS, ah, Phyllis, my life is  
     gray day,  
 Few are my years, but my grief  
     are not few,  
 Ever to youth should each day b  
     a May-day,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Warm wind and rose-breath and  
diamonded dew —  
Phyllis, ah, Phyllis, my life is a  
gray day.

Oh for the sunlight that shines on  
a May-day!

Only the cloud hangeth over  
my life.

Love that should bring me youth's  
happiest heyday

Brings me but seasons of sor-  
row and strife;

Phyllis, ah, Phyllis, my life is a  
gray day.

Sunshine or shadow, or gold day  
or gray day,

Life must be lived as our des-  
tinies rule;

Leisure or labor or work day or  
play day —

Feasts for the famous and fun  
for the fool;

Phyllis, ah, Phyllis, my life is a  
gray day.

### RIGHT'S SECURITY

WHAT if the wind do howl with-  
out,

And turn the creaking weather-  
vane;

What if the arrows of the rain  
Do beat against the window-pane?

Art thou not armored strong and  
fast

Against the sallies of the blast?  
Art thou not sheltered safe and  
well

Against the flood's insistent swell?

What boots it, that thou stand'st  
alone,

And laughest in the battle's face  
When all the weak have fled the  
place

And let their feet and fears keep  
pace?

Thou wavest still thine ensign,  
high,

And shoutest thy loud battle-cry;  
Higher than e'er the tempest  
roared,

It cleaves the silence like a sword.

Right arms and armors, too, that  
man

Who will not compromise with  
wrong;

Though single, he must front the  
throng,

And wage the battle hard and  
long.

Minorities, since time began,  
Have shown the better side of  
man;

And often in the lists of Time  
One man has made a cause sub-  
lime!

IF

If life were but a dream, my Love,  
And death the waking time;

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

If day had not a beam, my Love,  
And night had not a rhyme,—  
A barren, barren world were  
this  
Without one saving gleam;  
I'd only ask that with a kiss  
You'd wake me from the  
dream.

If dreaming were the sum of  
days,  
And loving were the bane;  
If battling for a wreath of bays  
Could soothe a heart in pain,—  
I'd scorn the meed of battle's  
might,  
All other aims above  
I'd choose the human's higher  
right,  
To suffer and to love!

### THE SONG

My soul, lost in the music's mist,  
Roamed, rapt, 'neath skies of amethyst.  
The cheerless streets grew summer  
meads,  
The Son of Phœbus spurred his  
steeds,  
And, wand'ring down the mazy  
tune,  
December lost its way in June,  
While from a verdant vale I  
heard  
The piping of a love-lorn bird.

A something in the tender strain  
Revived an old, long-conquered  
pain,  
And as in depths of many seas,  
My heart was drowned in memories.  
The tears came welling to my  
eyes,  
Nor could I ask it otherwise;  
For, oh! a sweetness seems to  
last  
Amid the dregs of sorrows past.

It stirred a chord that here of  
late  
I'd grown to think could not vibrate.  
It brought me back the trust of  
youth,  
The world again was joy and  
truth.  
And Avice, blooming like a  
bride,  
Once more stood trusting at my  
side.  
But still, with bosom desolate,  
The 'lorn bird sang to find his  
mate.

Then there are trees, and lights  
and stars,  
The silv'ry tinkle of guitars;  
And throbs again as throbbed that  
waltz,  
Before I knew that hearts were  
false.  
Then like a cold wave on a shore,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Comes silence and she sings no  
more.

I wake, I breathe, I think again,  
And walk the sordid ways of men.

### SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Air a-gittin' cool an' coolah,  
Frost a-comin' in de night,  
Hicka' nuts an' wa'nuts fallin',  
Possum keepin' out o' sight.  
Tu'key struttin' in de ba'nya'd,  
Nary step so proud ez his;  
Keep on struttin', Mistah Tu'key,  
Yo' do' know whut time it is.

Cidah press commence a-squeakin'  
Eatin' apples sto'ed away,  
Chillun swa'min' 'roun' lak ho'-  
nets,  
Huntin' aigs ermung de hay.  
Mistah Tu'key keep on gobblin'  
At de geese a-flyin' souf,  
Oomph! dat bird do' know whut's  
comin';  
Ef he did he'd shet his mouf.

Pumpkin gittin' good an' yallah  
Mek me open up my eyes;  
Seems lak it's a-lookin' at me  
Jes' a-la'in' dah sayin' "Pies."  
Tu'key gobbler gwine 'roun' blow-  
in',  
Gwine 'roun' gibbin' sass an'  
slack;  
Keep on talkin', Mistah Tu'key,  
You ain't seed no almanac.

Fa'mer walkin' th'oo de ba'nya'd  
Seein' how things is comin' on,  
Sees ef all de fowls is fatt'nin' —  
Good times comin' sho's you  
bo'n.

Hyeahs dat tu'key gobbler brag-  
gin',

Den his face break in a smile —  
Nebbah min', you sassy rascal,  
He's gwine nab you atter while.

Choppin' suet in de kitchen,  
Stonin' raisins in de hall,  
Beef a-cookin' fu' de mince meat,  
Spices groun' — I smell 'em all.  
Look hyeah, Tu'key, stop dat  
gobblin',

You ain' lured de sense ob  
feah,  
You ol' fool, yo' naik's in dangah,  
Do' you know Thanksgibbin's  
hyeah?

### WHY FADES A DREAM?

WHY fades a dream?  
An iridescent ray  
Flecked in between the tryst  
Of night and day.  
Why fades a dream? —  
Of consciousness the shade  
Wrought out by lack of light and  
made  
Upon life's stream.  
Why fades a dream?

That thought may thrive,  
So fades the fleshless dream;

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Lest men should learn to trust  
The things that seem.  
So fades a dream,  
That living thought may grow  
And like a waxing star-beam glow  
Upon life's stream —  
So fades a dream.

### THE SPARROW

A LITTLE bird, with plumage  
brown,  
Beside my window flutters down,  
A moment chirps its little strain,  
Ten taps upon my window-pane,  
And chirps again, and hops along,  
To call my notice to its song;  
But I work on, nor heed its lay,  
Till, in neglect, it flies away.

So birds of peace and hope and  
love  
Come fluttering earthward from  
above,  
To settle on life's window-sills,  
And ease our load of earthly ills;  
But we, in traffic's rush and din  
Too deep engaged to let them in,  
With deadened heart and sense  
plod on,  
Nor know our loss till they are  
gone.

### SPEAKIN' O' CHRISTMAS

BREEZES blowin' middlin' brisk,  
Snow-flakes thro' the air a-whisk,  
Fallin' kind o' soft an' light,

Not enough to make things white,  
But jest sorter siftin' down  
So 's to cover up the brown  
Of the dark world's rugged ways  
'N' make things look like holidays.  
Not smoothed over, but jest  
specked,

Sorter strainin' fur effect,  
An' not quite a-gittin' through  
What it started in to do.  
Mercy sakes! it does seem queer  
Christmas day is 'most nigh here.  
Somehow it don't seem to me  
Christmas like it used to be,—  
Christmas with its ice an' snow,  
Christmas of the long ago.  
You could feel its stir an' hum  
Weeks an' weeks before it come;  
Somethin' in the atmosphere  
Told you when the day was near,  
Did n't need no almanacs;  
That was one o' Nature's fac's.  
Every cottage decked out gay —  
Cedar wreaths an' holly spray —  
An' the stores, how they were  
drest,

Tinsel tell you could n't rest;  
Every winder fixed up pat,  
Candy canes, an' things like that;  
Noah's arks, an' guns, an' dolls,  
An' all kinds o' fol-de-rols.  
Then with frosty bells a-chime,  
Slidin' down the hills o' time,  
Right amidst the fun an' din  
Christmas come a-bustlin' in,  
Raised his cheery voice to call  
Out a welcome to us all;



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Hale and hearty, strong an' bluff,  
That was Christmas, sure enough.  
Snow knee-deep an' coastin' fine,  
Frozen mill-ponds all ashine,  
Seemin' jest to lay in wait,  
Beggin' you to come an' skate.  
An' you 'd git your gal an' go  
Stumpin' cheerily thro' the snow,  
Feelin' pleased an' skeert an'  
warm

'Cause she had a-holt yore arm.  
Why, when Christmas come in,  
we  
Spent the whole glad day in glee,  
Havin' fun an' feastin' high  
An' some courtin' on the sly.  
Bustin' in some neighbor's door  
An' then suddenly, before  
He could give his voice a lift,  
Yellin' at him, "Christmas gift."  
Now sich things are never heard,  
"Merry Christmas" is the word.  
But it's only change o' name,  
An' means givin' jest the same.  
There's too many new-styled ways  
Now about the holidays.  
I'd jest like once more to see  
Christmas like it used to be!

### LONESOME

MOTHER'S gone a-visitin' to spend  
a month er two,  
An', oh, the house is lonesome ez a  
nest whose birds has flew  
To other trees to build ag'in; the  
rooms seem jest so bare

That the echoes run like sperrits  
from the kitchen to the  
stair.

The shetters flap more lazy-like  
'n what they used to do,  
Sence mother's gone a-visitin' to  
spend a month er two.

We've killed the fattest chicken  
an' we've cooked her to a  
turn;

We've made the richest gravy,  
but I jest don't give a durn  
Fur nothin' 'at I drink er eat, er  
nothin' 'at I see.

The food ain't got the pleasant  
taste it used to have to me.

They's somep'n' stickin' in my  
throat ez tight ez hardened  
glue,

Sence mother's gone a-visitin' to  
spend a month er two.

The hollyhocks air jest ez pink,  
they're double ones at that,  
An' I wuz prouder of 'em than a  
baby of a cat.

But now I don't go near 'em,  
though they nod an' blush at  
me,

Fur they's somep'n' seems to gall  
me in their keerless sort o'  
glee

An' all their fren'ly noddin' an'  
their blushin' seems to say:

"You're purty lonesome, John,  
old boy, sence mother's gone  
away."



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

The neighbors ain't so fren'ly ez it  
seems they 'd ort to be;  
They seem to be a-lookin' kinder  
sideways like at me,  
A-kinder feared they 'd tech me  
off ez ef I wuz a match,  
An' all because 'at mother's gone  
an' I'm a-keepin' batch!  
I'm shore I don't do nothin'  
worse 'n what I used to do  
'Fore mother went a-visitin' to  
spend a month er two.

The sparrers ac's more fearsome  
like an' won't hop quite so  
near,  
The cricket's chirp is sadder, an'  
the sky ain't ha'f so clear;  
When ev'nin' comes, I set an'  
smoke tell my eyes begin to  
swim,  
An' things aroun' commence to  
look all blurred an' faint an'  
dim.  
Well, I guess I 'll have to own up  
'at I'm feelin' purty blue  
Sence mother's gone a-visitin' to  
spend a month er two.

### GROWIN' GRAY

HELLO, ole man, you're a-gittin'  
gray,  
An' it beats ole Ned to see the  
way  
'At the crow's feet's a-getherin'  
aroun' yore eyes;

Tho' it ought n't to cause me no  
su'prise,  
Fur there's many a sun 'at you've  
seen rise  
An' many a one you've seen go  
down  
Sence yore step was light an' yore  
hair was brown,  
An' storms an' snows have had  
their way —  
Hello, ole man, you're a-gittin'  
gray.

Hello, ole man, you're a-gittin'  
gray,  
An' the youthful pranks 'at you  
used to play  
Are dreams of a far past long ago  
That lie in a heart where the fires  
burn low —  
That has lost the flame though it  
kept the glow,  
An' spite of drivin' snow an' storm,  
Beats bravely on forever warm.  
December holds the place of  
May —  
Hello, ole man, you're a-gittin'  
gray.

Hello, ole man, you're a-gittin'  
gray —  
Who cares what the carpin' young-  
sters say?  
For, after all, when the tale is told,  
Love proves if a man is young or  
old!  
Old age can't make the heart grow  
cold

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

When it does the will of an honest  
mind;

When it beats with love fur all  
mankind;

Then the night but leads to a fairer  
day —

Hello, ole man, you 're a-gittin'  
gray!

### TO THE MEMORY OF MARY YOUNG

God has his plans, and what if we  
With our sight be too blind to see  
Their full fruition; cannot he,  
Who made it, solve the mystery?  
One whom we loved has fall'n  
asleep,

Not died; although her calm be  
deep,

Some new, unknown, and strange  
surprise

In Heaven holds enrapt her eyes.

And can you blame her that her  
gaze

Is turned away from earthly ways,  
When to her eyes God's light and

love  
Have giv'n the view of things  
above?

A gentle spirit sweetly good,  
The pearl of precious womanhood;

Who heard the voice of duty  
clear,

And found her mission soon and  
near.

She loved all nature, flowers fair,  
The warmth of sun, the kiss of air,  
The birds that filled the sky with  
song,

The stream that laughed its way  
along.

Her home to her was shrine and  
throne,

But one love held her not alone;  
She sought out poverty and grief,  
Who touched her robe and found  
relief.

So sped she in her Master's  
work,

Too busy and too brave to shirk,  
When through the silence, dusk  
and dim,

God called her and she fled to him.  
We wonder at the early call,

And tears of sorrow can but fall  
For her o'er whom we spread the  
pall;

But faith, sweet faith, is over  
all.

The house is dust, the voice is  
dumb,

But through undying years to  
come,

The spark that glowed within her  
soul

Shall light our footsteps to the  
goal.

She went her way; but oh, she  
trod

The path that led her straight to  
God.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Such lives as this put death to  
scorn;  
They lose our day to find God's  
morn.

### WHEN MALINDY SINGS

G'WAY an' quit dat noise, Miss  
Lucy.—

Put dat music book away;  
What's de use to keep on tryin'?  
Ef you practise twell you're  
gray,

You cain't sta't no notes a-flyin'  
Lak de ones dat rants and rings  
F'om de kitchen to be big woods  
When Malindy sings.

You ain't got de nachel o'gans  
Fu' to make de soun' come right,  
You ain't got de tu'ns an' twistin's  
Fu' to make it sweet an' light.  
Tell you one thing now, Miss  
Lucy,

An' I'm tellin' you fu' true,  
When hit comes to raal right  
singin',  
'T ain't no easy thing to do.

Easy 'nough fu' folks to hollah,  
Lookin' at de lines an' dots,  
When dey ain't no one kin sence it,  
An' de chune comes in, in spots;  
But fu' real melojous music,  
Dat jes' strikes yo' hea't and  
clings,

Jes' you stan' an' listen wif me  
When Malindy sings.

Ain't you nevah hyeahd Malindy?  
Blessed soul, tek up de cross!  
Look hyeah, ain't you jokin',  
honey?

Well, you don't know whut you  
los'.

Y' ought to hyeah dat gal a-wa'b-  
lin',

Robins, la'ks, an' all dem things,  
Heish dey moufs an' hides dey  
face.

When Malindy sings.

Fiddlin' man jes' stop his fiddlin',  
Lay his fiddle on de she'f;  
Mockin'-bird quit tryin' to whistle,  
'Cause he jes' so shamed hisse'f.

Folks a-playin' on de banjo  
Draps dey fingahs on de  
strings—

Bless yo' soul—fu'gits to move  
em,

When Malindy sings.

She jes' spreads huh mouf and hol-  
lahs,

"Come to Jesus," twell you  
hyeah

Sinnahs' tremblin' steps and voices,  
Timid-lak a-drawin' neah;

Den she tu'ns to "Rock of Ages,"  
Simply to de cross she clings,  
An' you fin' yo' teahs a-drappin'  
When Malindy sings.

Who dat says dat humble praises  
Wif de Master nevah counts?

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Heish yo' mouf, I hyeah dat music,  
Ez hit rises up an' mounts —  
Floatin' by de hills an' valleys,  
Way above dis buryin' sod,  
Ez hit makes its way in glory  
To de very gates of God!

Oh, hit's sweetah dan de music  
Of an edicated band;  
An' hit's dearah dan de battle's  
Song o' triumph in de lan'.  
It seems holier dan evenin'  
When de solemn chu'ch bell  
rings,  
Ez I sit an' ca'mly listen  
While Malindy sings.

Towsah, stop dat ba'kin', hyeah  
me!  
Mandy, mek dat chile keep still;  
Don't you hyeah de echoes callin'  
F'om de valley to de hill?  
Let me listen, I can hyeah it,  
Th'oo de bresh of angels' wings,  
Sof' an' sweet, "Swing Low,  
Sweet Chariot,"  
Ez Malindy sings.

### THE PARTY

DEY had a gread big pahty  
down to Tom's de othah  
night;  
Was I dah? You bet! I nevah  
in my life see sich a sight;  
All de folks f'om fou' plantations  
was invited, an' dey come,

Dey come troopin' thick ez chillun  
when dey hyeahs a fife an'  
drum.

Evahbody dressed deir fines'—  
Heish yo' mouf an' git  
away,

Ain't seen no sich fancy dressin'  
sence las' quah'tly meetin'  
day;

Gals all dressed in silks an' satins,  
not a wrinkle ner a crease,  
Eyes a-battin', teeth a-shinin', haih  
breshed back ez slick ez  
grease;

Sku'ts all tucked an' puffed an'  
ruffled, evah blessed seam an'  
stitch;

Ef you 'd seen 'em wif deir mistus,  
could n't swahed to which  
was which.

Men all dressed up in Prince Al-  
berts, swaller-tails 'u'd tek yo'  
bref!

I cain't tell you nothin' 'bout it,  
y' ought to seen it fu' yo'se'f.  
Who was dah? Now who you  
askin'? How you 'spect I  
gwine to know?

You mus' think I stood an'  
counted evahbody at de do'.

Ole man Babah's house-boy Isaac,  
brung dat gal, Malindy Jane,  
Huh a-hangin' to his elbow, him  
a-struttin' wif a cane;

My, but Hahvey Jones was jeal-  
ous! seemed to stick him lak  
a tho'n;

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

But he laughed with Viney Cah-  
teah, tryin' ha'd to not let on,  
But a pusson would 'a' noticed  
f'om de d'rection of his look,  
Dat he was watchin' ev'ry step dat  
Ike an' Lindy took.

Ike he foun' a cheer an' asked huh:  
"Won't you set down?" wif  
a smile,

An' she answe'd up a-bowin',  
"Oh, I reckon 't ain't wuth  
while."

Dat was jes' fu' style, I reckon,  
'cause she sot down jes' de  
same,

An' she stayed dah 'twell he  
fetch'd huh fu' to jine some  
so't o' game;

Den I hyeahd huh sayin' propah,  
ez she riz to go away,

"Oh, you raly mus' excuse me,  
fu' I hardly keers to play."

But I seen huh in a minute wif de  
othahs on de flo',

An' dah was n't any one o' dem  
a-playin' any mo';

Comin' down de flo' a-bowin' an'  
a-swayin' an' a-swingin',

Puttin' on huh high-toned man-  
nahs all de time dat she was  
singin':

"Oh, swing Johnny up an' down,  
swing him all aroun',

Swing Johnny up an' down, swing  
him all aroun',

Oh, swing Johnny up an' down,  
swing him all aroun'

Fa' you well, my dahlin'."

Had to laff at ole man Johnson,  
he 's a caution now, you bet —

Hittin' clost onto a hunderd, but  
he 's spry an' nimble yet;

He 'lowed how a-so't o' gigglin',  
"I ain't ole, I'll let you see,

D'ain't no use in gittin' feeble, now  
you youngstahs jes' watch  
me,"

An' he grabbed ole Aunt Marier  
— weighs th'ee hunderd mo'  
er less,

An' he spun huh 'roun' de cabin  
swingin' Johnny lak de res'.

Evahbody laffed an' hollahed:  
"Go it! Swing huh, Uncle  
Jim!"

An' he swung huh too, I reckon,  
lak a youngstah, who but  
him.

Dat was bettah'n young Scott  
Thomas, tryin' to be so awful  
smaht.

You know when dey gits to singin'  
an' dey comes to dat ere paht:

"In some lady's new brick  
house,

In some lady's gyahden.

Ef you don't let me out, I  
will jump out,

So fa' you well, my dahlin'."

Den dey's got a circle 'roun' you,  
an' you's got to break de  
line;

Well, dat dahky was so anxious,  
lak to bust hisse'f a-tryin';

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

- Kep' on blund'rin' 'roun' an'  
foolin' 'twell he giv' one  
gread big jump,  
Broke de line, an lit head-fo'most  
in de fiah-place right plump;  
Hit 'ad fiah in it, mind you; well,  
I thought my soul I'd bust,  
Tried my best to keep f'om laffin',  
but hit seemed like die I  
must!  
Y' ought to seen dat man a-scam-  
blin' f'om de ashes an' de  
grime.  
Did it bu'n him! Sich a question,  
why he did n't give it time;  
Th'ow'd dem ashes and dem cin-  
dahs evah which-a-way I  
guess,  
An' you nevah did, I reckon, clap  
yo' eyes on sich a mess;  
Fu' he sholy made a picter an' a  
funny one to boot,  
Wif his clothes all full o' ashes  
an' his face all full o' soot.  
Well, hit laked to stopped de  
pahty, an' I reckon lak ez  
not  
Dat it would ef Tom's wife,  
Mandy, had n't happened on  
de spot,  
To invite us out to suppah — well,  
we scrambled to de table,  
An' I'd lak to tell you 'bout it —  
what we had — but I ain't  
able,  
Mention jes' a few things, dough  
I know I had n't orter,
- Fu' I know 't will staht a hank'rin'  
an' yo' mouf'll 'mence to  
worter.  
We had wheat bread white ez cot-  
ton an' a egg pone jes like  
gol',  
Hog jole, bilin' hot an' steamin'  
roasted shoat an' ham sliced  
cold —  
Look out! What's de mattah wif  
you? Don't be fallin' on de  
flo';  
Ef it's go'n' to 'fect you dat way,  
I won't tell you nothin'  
mo'.  
Dah now — well, we had hot  
chittlin's — now you's tryin'  
ag'in to fall,  
Cain't you stan' to hyeah about it?  
S'pose you'd been an' seed it  
all;  
Seed dem gread big sweet pertaters,  
layin' by de possum's side,  
Seed dat coon in all his gravy,  
reckon den you'd up and  
died!  
Mandy 'lowed "you all mus'  
'scuse me, d' wa'n't much  
upon my she'ves,  
But I's done my bes' to suit you,  
so set down an' he'p  
yo'se'ves."  
Tom, he 'lowed: "I don't b'lieve  
in 'pologisin' an' perfessin',  
Let 'em tek it lak dey ketch it.  
Eldah Thompson, ask de  
blessin'."



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Wish you'd seed dat colo'ed  
preachah cleah his th' oat an'  
bow his head;

One eye shet, an' one eye open,—  
dis is evah wud he said:

"Lawd, look down in tendah  
mussy on sich generous hea'ts  
ez dese;

Make us truly thankful, amen.  
Pass dat possum, ef you  
please!"

Well, we eat and drunk ouah  
po'tion, 'twell dah was n't  
nothin' lef,

An' we felt jes' like new sausage,  
we was mos' nigh stuffed to  
def!

Tom, he knowed how we'd be  
feelin', so he had de fiddlah  
'roun',

An' he made us cleah de cabin  
fu' to dance dat suppah  
down.

Jim, de fiddlah, chuned his fiddle,  
put some rosum on his  
bow,

Set a pine box on de table, mounted  
it an' let huh go!

He's a fiddlah, now I tell you, an'  
he made dat fiddle ring,

'Twell de ol'est an' de lamest had  
to give deir feet a fling.

Jigs, cotillions, reels an' break-  
downs, cordrills an' a waltz  
er two;

Bless yo' soul, dat music winged  
'em an' dem people lak to  
flew.

Cripple Joe, de old rheumatic,  
danced dat flo' f'om side to  
middle,

Th'owed away his crutch an'  
hopped it; what's rheumatics  
'ginst a fiddle?

Eldah Thompson got so tickled  
dat he lak to los' his grace,

Had to tek bofe feet an' hol' dem  
so's to keep 'em in deir place.

An' de Christuns an' de sinnahs  
got so mixed up on dat flo',

Dat I don't see how dey'd pahted  
ef de trump had chanced to  
blow.

Well, we danced dat way an' ca-  
pahed in de mos' redic'lous  
way,

'Twell de roostahs in de bahnyard  
cleahed deir th'oats an' crowed  
fu' day.

Y' ought to been dah, fu' I tell  
you evahthing was rich an'  
prime,

An' dey ain't no use in talkin', we  
jes had one scrumptious time!



## **LYRICS OF THE HEARTHSIDE**



## LOVE'S APOTHEOSIS

Love me. I care not what the  
circling years  
To me may do.  
If, but in spite of time and tears,  
You prove but true.

Love me — albeit grief shall dim  
mine eyes,  
And tears bedew,  
I shall not e'en complain, for then  
my skies  
Shall still be blue.

Love me, and though the winter  
snow shall pile,  
And leave me chill,  
Thy passion's warmth shall make  
for me, meanwhile,  
A sun-kissed hill.

And when the days have length-  
ened into years,  
And I grow old,  
Oh, spite of pains and griefs and  
cares and fears,  
Grow thou not cold.

Then hand and hand we shall pass  
up the hill,  
I say not down;  
That twain go up, of love, who've  
loved their fill,—  
To gain love's crown.

Love me, and let my life take up  
thine own,  
As sun the dew.  
Come, sit, my queen, for in my  
heart a throne  
Awaits for you!

## THE PARADOX

I AM the mother of sorrows,  
I am the ender of grief;  
I am the bud and the blossom,  
I am the late-falling leaf.

I am thy priest and thy poet,  
I am thy serf and thy king;  
I cure the tears of the heartsick,  
When I come near they shall  
sing.

White are my hands as the snow-  
drop;  
Swart are my fingers as clay;  
Dark is my frown as the mid-  
night,  
Fair is my brow as the day.

Battle and war are my minions,  
Doing my will as divine;  
I am the calmer of passions,  
Peace is a nursling of mine.

Speak to me gently or curse me,  
Seek me or fly from my sight;  
I am thy fool in the morning,  
Thou art my slave in the night.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Down to the grave will I take  
thee,

Out from the noise of the  
strife;

Then shalt thou see me and know  
me —

Death, then, no longer, but life.

Then shalt thou sing at my com-  
ing,

Kiss me with passionate breath,  
Clasp me and smile to have  
thought me

Aught save the foeman of  
Death.

Come to me, brother, when weary,  
Come when thy lonely heart  
swells;

I'll guide thy footsteps and lead  
thee

Down where the Dream Wom-  
an dwells.

### OVER THE HILLS

OVER the hills and the valleys of  
dreaming

Slowly I take my way.

Life is the night with its dream-  
visions teeming,

Death is the waking at day.

Down thro' the dales and the bow-  
ers of loving,

Singing, I roam afar.

Daytime or night-time, I con-  
stantly roving,—

Dearest one, thou art my star.

### WITH THE LARK

NIGHT is for sorrow and dawn is  
for joy,

Chasing the troubles that fret and  
annoy;

Darkness for sighing and daylight  
for song,—

Cheery and chaste the strain  
heartfelt and strong.

All the night through, though I  
moan in the dark,

I wake in the morning to sing  
with the lark.

Deep in the midnight the rain  
whips the leaves,

Softly and sadly the wood-spirit  
grieves.

But when the first hue of dawn  
tints the sky,

I shall shake out my wings like  
the birds and be dry;

And though, like the rain-drops, I  
grieved through the dark,

I shall wake in the morning to  
sing with the lark.

On the high hills of heaven, some  
morning to be,

Where the rain shall not grieve  
thro' the leaves of the tree,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

There my heart will be glad for  
the pain I have known,  
For my hand will be clasped in the  
hand of mine own;  
And though life has been hard and  
death's pathway been dark,  
I shall wake in the morning to  
sing with the lark.

### IN SUMMER

OH, summer has clothed the earth  
In a cloak from the loom of  
the sun!  
And a mantle, too, of the skies'  
soft blue,  
And a belt where the rivers run.  
  
And now for the kiss of the wind,  
And the touch of the air's soft  
hands,  
With the rest from strife and the  
heat of life,  
With the freedom of lakes and  
lands.  
  
I envy the farmer's boy  
Who sings as he follows the  
plow;  
While the shining green of the  
young blades lean  
To the breezes that cool his  
brow.

He sings to the dewy morn,  
No thought of another's ear;

But the song he sings is a chant  
for kings  
And the whole wide world to  
hear.

He sings of the joys of life,  
Of the pleasures of work and  
rest,  
From an o'erfull heart, without  
aim or art;  
'T is a song of the merriest.

O ye who toil in the town,  
And ye who moil in the mart,  
Hear the artless song, and your  
faith made strong  
Shall renew your joy of heart.

Oh, poor were the worth of the  
world  
If never a song were heard,—  
If the sting of grief had no re-  
lief,  
And never a heart were stirred.

So, long as the streams run down,  
And as long as the robins trill,  
Let us taunt old Care with a  
merry air,  
And sing in the face of ill.

### THE MYSTIC SEA

THE smell of the sea in my nos-  
trils,  
The sound of the sea in mine  
ears;

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

The touch of the spray on my  
burning face,  
Like the mist of reluctant tears.

The blue of the sky above me,  
The green of the waves beneath;  
The sun flashing down on a gray-  
white sail  
Like a scimitar from its sheath.

And ever the breaking billows,  
And ever the rocks' disdain;  
And ever a thrill in mine inmost  
heart  
That my reason cannot explain.

So I say to my heart, "Be silent,  
The mystery of time is here;  
Death's way will be plain when  
we fathom the main,  
And the secret of life be clear."

### A SAILOR'S SONG

OH for the breath of the briny  
deep,  
And the tug of the bellying sail,  
With the sea-gull's cry across the  
sky  
And a passing boatman's hail.  
For, be she fierce or be she gay,  
The sea is a famous friend away.  
Ho! for the plains where the  
dolphins play,  
And the bend of the mast and  
spars,

And a fight at night with the wild  
sea-sprite  
When the foam has drowned the  
stars.

And, pray, what joy can the lands-  
man feel  
Like the rise and fall of a sliding  
keel?

Fair is the mead; the lawn is fair  
And the birds sing sweet on the  
lea;  
But the echo soft of a song aloft  
Is the strain that pleases me;  
And swish of rope and ring of  
chain  
Are music to men who sail the  
main.

Then, if you love me, let me sail  
While a vessel dares the deep;  
For the ship's my wife, and the  
breath of life  
Are the raging gales that sweep;  
And when I'm done with calm  
and blast,  
A slide o'er the side, and rest at  
last.

### THE BOHEMIAN

BRING me the livery of no other  
man.  
I am my own to robe me at my  
pleasure.  
Accepted rules to me disclose no  
treasure:

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

What is the chief who shall my  
garments plan?

No garb conventional but I'll  
attack it.

(Come, why not don my span-  
gled jacket?)

### ABSENCE

GOOD-NIGHT, my love, for I have  
dreamed of thee

In waking dreams, until my soul  
is lost —

Is lost in passion's wide and shore-  
less sea,

Where, like a ship, unruddered, it  
is tost

Hither and thither at the wild  
waves' will.

There is no potent Master's voice  
to still

This newer, more tempestuous  
Galilee!

The stormy petrels of my fancy  
fly

In warning course across the  
darkening green,

And, like a frightened bird, my  
heart doth cry

And seek to find some rock of rest  
between

The threatening sky and the re-  
lentless wave.

It is not length of life that grief  
doth crave,

But only calm and peace in which  
to die.

Here let me rest upon this single  
hope,

For oh, my wings are weary of the  
wind,

And with its stress no more may  
strive or cope.

One cry has dulled mine ears,  
mine eyes are blind,—

Would that o'er all the interven-  
ing space,

I might fly forth and see thee face  
to face.

I fly; I search, but, love, in gloom  
I grope.

Fly home, far bird, unto thy wait-  
ing nest;

Spread thy strong wings above the  
wind-swept sea.

Beat the grim breeze with thy un-  
ruffled breast

Until thou sittest wing to wing  
with me.

Then, let the past bring up its  
tales of wrong;

We shall chant low our sweet con-  
nubial song,

Till storm and doubt and past no  
more shall be!

### HER THOUGHT AND HIS

THE gray of the sea, and the gray  
of the sky,

A glimpse of the moon like a half-  
closed eye.

The gleam on the waves and the  
light on the land,



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

A thrill in my heart,— and — my  
sweetheart's hand.

She turned from the sea with a  
woman's grace,  
And the light fell soft on her  
upturned face,  
And I thought of the flood-tide of  
infinite bliss  
That would flow to my heart from  
a single kiss.

But my sweetheart was shy, so I  
dared not ask  
For the boon, so bravely I wore  
the mask.  
But into her face there came a  
flame:—  
I wonder could she have been  
thinking the same?

### THE RIGHT TO DIE

I HAVE no fancy for that ancient  
cant  
That makes us masters of our des-  
tinies,  
And not our lives, to hold or give  
them up  
As will direct; I cannot, will not  
think  
That men, the subtle worms, who  
plot and plan  
And scheme and calculate with  
such shrewd wit,  
Are such great blund'ring fools as  
not to know

When they have lived enough.

Men court not death  
When there are sweets still left in  
life to taste.  
Nor will a brave man choose to  
live when he,  
Full deeply drunk of life, has  
reached the dregs,  
And knows that now but bitter-  
ness remains.  
He is the coward who, outfaced  
in this,  
Fears the false goblins of another  
life.  
I honor him who being much  
harassed  
Drinks of sweet courage until  
drunk of it,—  
Then seizing Death, reluctant, by  
the hand,  
Leaps with him, fearless, to eter-  
nal peace!

### BEHIND THE ARRAS

As in some dim baronial hall re-  
strained,  
A prisoner sits, engirt by secret  
doors  
And waving tapestries that argue  
forth  
Strange passages into the outer  
air;  
So in this dimmer room which we  
call life,  
Thus sits the soul and marks with  
eye intent

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

That mystic curtain o'er the portal death;  
Still deeming that behind the arras lies

The lambent way that leads to lasting light.

Poor fooled and foolish soul!  
Know now that death

Is but a blind, false door that nowhere leads,

And gives no hope of exit final, free.

### WHEN THE OLD MAN SMOKES

In the forenoon's restful quiet,  
When the boys are off at school,  
When the window lights are shaded

And the chimney-corner cool,  
Then the old man seeks his arm-chair,

Lights his pipe and settles back;  
Falls a-dreaming as he draws it  
Till the smoke-wreaths gather black.

And the tear-drops come a-trickling

Down his cheeks, a silver flow—

Smoke or memories you wonder,  
But you never ask him,—no;  
For there's something almost sacred

To the other family folks

In those moods of silent dreaming

When the old man smokes.

Ah, perhaps he sits there dreaming

Of the love of other days  
And of how he used to lead her  
Through the merry dance's maze;

How he called her "little princess,"

And, to please her, used to twine

Tender wreaths to crown her tresses,

From the "matrimony vine."

Then before his mental vision  
Comes, perhaps, a sadder day,  
When they left his little princess  
Sleeping with her fellow clay.  
How his young heart throbbed,  
and pained him!

Why, the memory of it chokes!  
Is it of these things he's thinking  
When the old man smokes?

But some brighter thoughts possess him,

For the tears are dried the while.

And the old, worn face is wrinkled

In a reminiscent smile,  
From the middle of the forehead  
To the feebly trembling lip,

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

At some ancient prank remem-  
bered  
Or some long unheard-of quip.

Then the lips relax their tension  
And the pipe begins to slide,  
Till in little clouds of ashes,  
It falls softly at his side;  
And his head bends low and lower  
Till his chin lies on his breast,  
And he sits in peaceful slumber  
Like a little child at rest.

Dear old man, there's something  
sad'ning,

In these dreamy moods of yours,  
Since the present proves so fleet-  
ing,

All the past for you endures.  
Weeping at forgotten sorrows,  
Smiling at forgotten jokes;  
Life epitomized in minutes,  
When the old man smokes.

### THE GARRET

WITHIN a London garret high,  
Above the roofs and near the sky,  
My ill-rewarding pen I ply  
To win me bread.

This little chamber, six by four,  
Is castle, study, den, and more,—  
Altho' no carpet decks the floor,  
Nor down, the bed.

My room is rather bleak and bare  
I only have one broken chair,  
But then, there's plenty of fresh  
air,—

Some light, beside.  
What tho' I cannot ask my friend  
To share with me my odds and  
ends,  
A liberty my aerie lends,  
To most denied.

The bore who falters at the stair  
No more shall be my curse and  
care,

And duns shall fail to find my lair  
With beastly bills.

When debts have grown and  
funds are short,

I find it rather pleasant sport  
To live "above the common sort"  
With all their ills.

I write my rhymes and sing away  
And dawn may come or dusk o  
day:

Tho' fare be poor, my heart is  
gay,  
And full of glee.

Though chimney-pots be all m  
views;

'Tis nearer for the wingin  
Muse,

So I am sure she'll not refuse  
To visit me.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

TO E. H. K.

ON THE RECEIPT OF A FAMILIAR  
POEM

To me, like hauntings of a va-  
grant breath  
From some far forest which I  
once have known,  
The perfume of this flower of  
verse is blown.  
Who' seemingly soul-blossoms faint  
to death,  
Caught that with joy she bears  
e'er withereth.  
So, tho' the pregnant years have  
come and flown,  
Lives come and gone and al-  
tered like mine own,  
This poem comes to me a shib-  
boleth:  
Brings sound of past communings  
to my ear,  
Turns round the tide of time  
and bears me back  
Along an old and long un-  
traversed way;  
Makes me forget this is a later  
year,  
Makes me tread o'er a reminis-  
cent track,  
Half sad, half glad, to one  
forgotten day!

### A BRIDAL MEASURE

ME, essay a sprightly measure,  
Tuned to some light song of  
pleasure.

Maidens, let your brows be  
crowned  
As we foot this merry round.

From the ground a voice is sing-  
ing,  
From the sod a soul is springing.  
Who shall say 't is but a clod  
Quick'ning upward toward its  
God?

Who shall say it? Who may  
know it,  
That the clod is not a poet  
Waiting but a gleam to waken  
In a spirit music-shaken?

Phyllis, Phyllis, why be waiting?  
In the woods the birds are mating.  
From the tree beside the wall,  
Hear the am'rous robin call.

Listen to yon thrush's trilling;  
Phyllis, Phyllis, are you willing,  
When love speaks from cave  
and tree,  
Only we should silent be?

When the year, itself renewing,  
All the world with flowers is  
strewing,  
Then through Youth's Arcadian  
land,  
Love and song go hand in hand.

Come, unfold your vocal treasure,  
Sing with me a nuptial measure,—  
Let this springtime gambol be  
Bridal dance for you and me.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

### VENGEANCE IS SWEET

WHEN I was young I longed for  
Love,  
And held his glory far above  
All other earthly things. I cried:  
"Come, Love, dear Love, with me  
abide;"  
And with my subtlest art I wooed,  
And eagerly the wight pursued.  
But Love was gay and Love was  
shy,  
He laughed at me and passed me  
by.

Well, I grew old and I grew gray,  
When Wealth came wending  
down my way.  
I took his golden hand with glee,  
And comrades from that day were  
we.

Then Love came back with dole-  
ful face,  
And prayed that I would give him  
place.  
But, though his eyes with tears  
were dim,  
I turned my back and laughed at  
him.

### A HYMN

AFTER READING "LEAD, KINDLY  
LIGHT."

LEAD gently, Lord, and slow,  
For oh, my steps are weak,  
And ever as I go,  
Some soothing sentence speak;

That I may turn my face  
Through doubt's obscurity  
Toward thine abiding-place,  
E'en tho' I cannot see.

For lo, the way is dark;  
Through mist and cloud I grope  
Save for that fitful spark,  
The little flame of hope.

Lead gently, Lord, and slow,  
For fear that I may fall;  
I know not where to go  
Unless I hear thy call.

My fainting soul doth yearn  
For thy green hills afar;  
So let thy mercy burn —  
My greater, guiding star!

### JUST WHISTLE A BIT

JUST whistle a bit, if the day  
dark,  
And the sky be overcast:  
If mute be the voice of the pipin'  
lark,  
Why, pipe your own small blas

And it's wonderful how o'er the  
gray sky-track  
The truant warbler comes stea-  
ding back.  
But why need he come? for your  
soul's at rest,  
And the song in the heart,—  
that is best.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Just whistle a bit, if the night be  
drear

And the stars refuse to shine:  
And a gleam that mocks the star-  
light clear

Within you glows benign.

Till the dearth of light in the  
glooming skies

Is lost to the sight of your soul-lit  
eyes.

What matters the absence of moon  
or star?

The light within is the best by far.

Just whistle a bit, if there's work  
to do,

With the mind or in the soil.

And your note will turn out a  
talisman true

To exorcise grim Toil.

It will lighten your burden and  
make you feel

That there's nothing like work as  
a sauce for a meal.

And with song in your heart and  
the meal in — its place,

There'll be joy in your bosom and  
light in your face.

Just whistle a bit, if your heart  
be sore;

'Tis a wonderful balm for pain.

Just pipe some old melody o'er  
and o'er

Till it soothes like summer rain.

And perhaps 't would be best in a  
later day,

When Death comes stalking down  
the way,

To knock at your bosom and see  
if you're fit,

Then, as you wait calmly, just  
whistle a bit.

### THE BARRIER

THE Midnight wooed the Morn-  
ing-Star,

And prayed her: "Love come  
nearer;

Your swinging coldly there afar  
To me but makes you dearer!"

The Morning-Star was pale with  
dole

As said she, low replying:

"Oh, lover mine, soul of my soul,  
For you I too am sighing.

"But One ordained when we  
were born,

In spite of Love's insistence,  
That Night might only view the  
Morn

Adoring at a distance."

But as she spoke the jealous Sun  
Across the heavens panted.

"Oh, whining fools," he cried,  
"have done;

Your wishes shall be granted!"

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

He hurled his flaming lances far;  
The twain stood unaffrighted —  
And Midnight and the Morning-  
Star  
Lay down in death united!

### DREAMS

DREAM on, for dreams are sweet:  
Do not awaken!  
Dream on, and at thy feet  
Pomegranates shall be shaken.

Who likeneth the youth  
Of life to morning?  
'Tis like the night in truth,  
Rose-coloured dreams adorning.

The wind is soft above,  
The shadows umber.  
(There is a dream called Love.)  
Take thou the fullest slumber!

In Lethe's soothing stream,  
Thy thirst thou slakest.  
Sleep, sleep; 't is sweet to dream.  
Oh, weep when thou awakest!

### THE DREAMER

TEMPLES he built and palaces of  
air,  
And, with the artist's parent-  
pride aglow,  
His fancy saw his vague ideals  
grow  
Into creations marvellously fair;

He set his foot upon Fame's  
nether stair.  
But ah, his dream,—it had  
entranced him so  
He could not move. He could  
no farther go;  
But paused in joy that he was even  
there!

He did not wake until one day  
there gleamed  
Thro' his dark consciousness a  
light that racked  
His being till he rose, alert to act.  
But lo! what he had dreamed, the  
while he dreamed,  
Another, wedding action unto  
thought,  
Into the living, pulsing world  
had brought.

### WAITING

THE sun has slipped his tether  
And galloped down the west.  
(Oh, it's weary, weary waiting,  
love.)  
The little bird is sleeping  
In the softness of its nest.  
Night follows day, day follows  
dawn,  
And so the time has come and  
gone:  
And it's weary, weary waiting,  
love.

The cruel wind is rising  
With a whistle and a wail.



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

(And it's weary, weary waiting,  
love.)

My eyes are seaward straining  
For the coming of a sail;  
But void the sea, and void the  
beach  
Far and beyond where gaze can  
reach!

And it's weary, weary waiting,  
love.

I heard the bell-buoy ringing —  
How long ago it seems!

(Oh, it's weary, weary waiting,  
love.)

And ever still, its knelling  
Crashes in upon my dreams.  
The banns were read, my frock  
was sewn;

Since then two seasons' winds  
have blown —

And it's weary, weary waiting,  
love.

The stretches of the ocean  
Are bare and bleak to-day.

(Oh, it's weary, weary waiting,  
love.)

My eyes are growing dimmer —  
Is it tears, or age, or spray?

But I will stay till you come home.  
Strange ships come in across the  
foam!

But it's weary, weary waiting,  
love.

## THE END OF THE CHAPTER

AH, yes, the chapter ends to-day;  
We even lay the book away;  
But oh, how sweet the moments  
sped  
Before the final page was read!

We tried to read between the lines  
The Author's deep-concealed de-  
signs;

But scant reward such search se-  
cures;

You saw my heart and I saw  
yours.

The Master,—He who penned  
the page

And bade us read it,—He is sage:  
And what he orders, you and I  
Can but obey, nor question why.

We read together and forgot  
The world about us. Time was  
not.

Unheeded and unfelt, it fled.

We read and hardly knew we  
read.

Until beneath a sadder sun,  
We came to know the book was  
done.

Then, as our minds were but new  
lit,

It dawned upon us what was writ;

And we were startled. In our  
eyes,

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Looked forth the light of great  
surprise.

Then as a deep-toned tocsin tolls,  
A voice spoke forth: "Behold  
your souls!"

I do, I do. I cannot look  
Into your eyes: so close the book.  
But brought it grief or brought it  
bliss,  
No other page shall read like this!

### SYMPATHY

I KNOW what the caged bird feels,  
alas!

When the sun is bright on the  
upland slopes;

When the wind stirs soft through  
the springing grass,

And the river flows like a stream  
of glass;

When the first bird sings and  
the first bud opes,

And the faint perfume from its  
chalice steals —

I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats  
his wing

Till its blood is red on the cruel  
bars;

For he must fly back to his perch  
and cling

When he fain would be on the  
bough a-swing;

And a pain still throbs in the  
old, old scars

And they pulse again with a keener  
sting —

I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings  
ah me,

When his wing is bruised and  
his bosom sore,—

When he beats his bars and he  
would be free;

It is not a carol of joy or glee,  
But a prayer that he sends from

his heart's deep core,

But a plea, that upward to Heaven  
he flings —

I know why the caged bird sings!

### LOVE AND GRIEF

OUT of my heart, one treach'rous  
winter's day,

I locked young Love and threw  
the key away.

Grief, wandering widely, found  
the key,

And hastened with it, straight  
way, back to me,

With Love beside him. He un-  
locked the door

And bade Love enter with him  
there and stay.

And so the twain abide for ever  
more.

### LOVE'S CHASTENING

Once Love grew bold and arro-  
gant of air,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Proud of the youth that made him  
fresh and fair;  
unto Grief he spake, "What  
right hast thou  
to part or parcel of this heart?"  
Grief's brow  
Was darkened with the storm of  
inward strife;  
Thrice smote he Love as only he  
might dare,  
And Love, pride purged, was chas-  
tened all his life.

### MORTALITY

ASHES to ashes, dust unto dust,  
What of his loving, what of his  
lust?  
What of his passion, what of his  
pain?  
What of his poverty, what of his  
pride?  
Earth, the great mother, has called  
him again:  
Deeply he sleeps, the world's ver-  
dict defied.  
Shall he be tried again? Shall he  
go free?  
Who shall the court convene?  
Where shall it be?  
No answer on the land, none from  
the sea.  
Only we know that as he did, we  
must:  
You with your theories, you with  
your trust,—  
Ashes to ashes, dust unto dust!

### LOVE

A LIFE was mine full of the close  
concern  
Of many-voiced affairs. The  
world sped fast;  
Behind me, ever rolled a preg-  
nant past.  
A present came equipped with lore  
to learn.  
Art, science, letters, in their turn,  
Each one allured me with its  
treasures vast;  
And I staked all for wisdom,  
till at last  
Thou cam'st and taught my soul  
anew to yearn.  
I had not dreamed that I could  
turn away  
From all that men with brush  
and pen had wrought;  
But ever since that memorable  
day  
When to my heart the truth of  
love was brought,  
I have been wholly yielded to  
its sway,  
And had no room for any other  
thought.

### SHE GAVE ME A ROSE

SHE gave a rose,  
And I kissed it and pressed it.  
I love her, she knows,  
And my action confessed it.  
She gave me a rose,  
And I kissed it and pressed it

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Ah, how my heart glows,  
    Could I ever have guessed it?  
It is fair to suppose  
    That I might have repressed it:  
She gave me a rose,  
    And I kissed it and pressed it.

'T was a rhyme in life's prose  
    That uplifted and blest it.  
Man's nature, who knows  
    Until love comes to test it?  
She gave me a rose,  
    And I kissed it and pressed it.

### DREAM SONG I

LONG years ago, within a distant  
    clime,  
Ere Love had touched me with  
    his wand sublime,  
I dreamed of one to make my life's  
    calm May  
The panting passion of a sum-  
    mer's day.  
And ever since, in almost sad sus-  
    pense,  
I have been waiting with a soul  
    intense  
To greet and take unto myself  
    the beams,  
Of her, my star, the lady of my  
    dreams.  
O Love, still longed and looked  
    for, come to me,

Be thy far home by mountain,  
    vale, or sea.  
My yearning heart may never find  
    its rest  
Until thou liest rapt upon my  
    breast.  
The wind may bring its perfume:  
    from the south,  
Is it so sweet as breath from my  
    love's mouth?  
Oh, naught that surely is, and  
    naught that seems  
May turn me from the lady of my  
    dreams.

### DREAM SONG II

PRAY, what can dreams avail  
    To make love or to mar?  
The child within the cradle rail  
    Lies dreaming of the star.  
But is the star by this beguiled  
    To leave its place and seek the  
    child?  
The poor plucked rose within its  
    glass  
Still dreameth of the bee;  
But, tho' the lagging moments  
    pass,  
Her Love she may not see.  
If dream of child and flower fail,  
Why should a maiden's dreams  
    prevail?

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

### CHRISTMAS IN THE HEART

THE snow lies deep upon the  
ground,  
And winter's brightness all around  
Decks bravely out the forest sere,  
With jewels of the brave old year.  
The coasting crowd upon the hill  
With some new spirit seems to  
thrill;  
And all the temple bells achime.  
Ring out the glee of Christmas  
time.

In happy homes the brown oak-  
bough  
Vies with the red-gemmed holly  
now;  
And here and there, like pearls,  
there show  
The berries of the mistletoe.  
A sprig upon the chandelier  
Says to the maidens, "Come not  
here!"  
Even the pauper of the earth  
Some kindly gift has cheered to  
mirth!

Within his chamber, dim and cold,  
There sits a grasping miser old.  
He has no thought save one of  
gain,—  
To grind and gather and grasp  
and drain.  
A peal of bells, a merry shout  
Assail his ear: he gazes out  
Upon a world to him all gray,

And snarls, "Why, this is Christ-  
mas Day!"

No, man of ice,—for shame, for  
shame!  
For "Christmas Day" is no mere  
name.  
No, not for you this ringing cheer,  
This festal season of the year.  
And not for you the chime of bells  
From holy temple rolls and swells.  
In day and deed he has no part —  
Who holds not Christmas in his  
heart!

### THE KING IS DEAD

AYE, lay him in his grave, the old  
dead year!  
His life is lived — fulfilled his  
destiny.  
Have you for him no sad, regret-  
ful tear  
To drop beside the cold, unfol-  
lowed bier?  
Can you not pay the tribute of a  
sigh?

Was he not kind to you, this dead  
old year?  
Did he not give enough of earthly  
store?  
Enough of love, and laughter, and  
good cheer?  
Have not the skies you scanned  
sometimes been clear?

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

How, then, of him who dies, could  
you ask more?

It is not well to hate him for the  
pain

He brought you, and the sorrows  
manifold.

To pardon him these hurts still I  
am fain;

For in the panting period of his  
reign,

He brought me new wounds, but  
he healed the old.

One little sigh for thee, my poor,  
dead friend —

One little sigh while my com-  
panions sing.

Thou art so soon forgotten in the  
end;

We cry e'en as thy footsteps down-  
ward tend:

"The king is dead! long live the  
king!"

### THEOLOGY

THERE is a heaven, for ever, day  
by day,

The upward longing of my soul  
doth tell me so.

There is a hell, I'm quite as sure;  
for pray,

If there were not, where would  
my neighbours go?

### RESIGNATION

LONG had I grieved at what I  
deemed abuse;

But now I am as grain within  
the mill.

If so be thou must crush me for  
thy use,

Grind on, O potent God, and  
do thy will!

### LOVE'S HUMILITY

As some rapt gazer on the lowly  
earth,

Looks up to radiant planets,  
ranging far,

So I, whose soul doth know thy  
wondrous worth

Look longing up to thee as to a  
star.

### PRECEDENT

THE poor man went to the rich  
man's doors,

"I come as Lazarus came," he  
said.

The rich man turned with humble  
head,—

"I will send my dogs to lick your  
sores!"

### SHE TOLD HER BEADS

SHE told her beads with down-  
cast eyes,

Within the ancient chapel dim;  
And ever as her fingers slim

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Slit o'er th' insensate ivories,  
My rapt soul followed, spaniel-  
wise.

Ah, many were the beads she wore;  
But as she told them o'er and  
o'er,

They did not number all my sighs.  
My heart was filled with unvoiced  
cries

And prayers and pleadings un-  
expressed;

But while I burned with Love's  
unrest,  
She told her beads with down-  
cast eyes.

### LITTLE LUCY LANDMAN

Oh, the day has set me dreaming  
In a strange, half solemn way  
Of the feelings I experienced  
On another long past day,—  
Of the way my heart made music  
When the buds began to blow,  
And o' little Lucy Landman  
Whom I loved long years ago.

It's in spring, the poet tells us,  
That we turn to thoughts of  
love,

And our hearts go out a-wooing  
With the lapwing and the dove.  
But whene'er the soul goes seeking  
Its twin-soul, upon the wing,  
've a notion, backed by mem'ry,  
That it's love that makes the  
spring.

I have heard a robin singing  
When the boughs were brown  
and bare,  
And the chilling hand of winter  
Scattered jewels through the air.  
And in spite of dates and seasons,  
It was always spring, I know,  
When I loved Lucy Landman  
In the days of long ago.

Ah, my little Lucy Landman,  
I remember you as well  
As if 't were only yesterday  
I strove your thoughts to tell,—  
When I tilted back your bonnet,  
Looked into your eyes so true,  
Just to see if you were loving  
Me as I was loving you.

Ah, my little Lucy Landman  
It is true it was denied  
You should see a fuller summer  
And an autumn by my side.  
But the glance of love's sweet sun-  
light  
Which your eyes that morning  
gave  
Has kept spring within my bosom,  
Though you lie within the  
grave.

### THE GOURD

IN the heavy earth the miner  
Toiled and laboured day by day,  
Wrenching from the miser moun-  
tain  
Brilliant treasure where it lay.



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

And the artist worn and weary  
Wrought with labour manifold  
That the king might drink his  
nectar

From a goblet made of gold.

On the prince's groaning table  
Mid the silver gleaming bright  
Mirroring the happy faces

Giving back the flaming light,  
Shine the cups of priceless crystal  
Chased with many a lovely line,  
Glowing now with warmer colour,  
Crimsoned by the ruby wine.

In a valley sweet with sunlight,  
Fertile with the dew and rain,  
Without miner's daily labour,

Without artist's nightly pain,  
There there grows the cup I drink  
from,

Summer's sweetness in it stored,  
And my lips pronounce a blessing  
As they touch an old brown  
gourd.

Why, the miracle at Cana

In the land of Galilee,  
Tho' it puzzles all the scholars,  
Is no longer strange to me.  
For the poorest and the humblest  
Could a priceless wine afford,  
If they'd only dip up water  
With a sunlight-seasoned gourd.

So a health to my old comrade,  
And a song of praise to sing

When he rests inviting kisses  
In his place beside the spring.  
Give the king his golden goblet  
Give the prince his crystal  
hoard;

But for me the sparkling water  
From a brown and brimming  
gourd!

### THE KNIGHT

OUR good knight, Ted, girds his  
broadsword on  
(And he wields it well,  
ween);

He's on his steed, and away he  
gone

To the fight for king and queen  
What tho' no edge the broadsword  
hath?

What tho' the blade be made of  
lath?

'T is a valiant hand  
That wields the brand,  
So, foeman, clear the path!

He prances off at a goodly pace  
'T is a noble steed he rides,  
That bears as well in the speed  
race

As he bears in battle-tides.  
What tho' 't is but a rocking-chair  
That prances with this stately air  
'T is a warrior bold

The reins doth hold,  
Who bids all foes beware!

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

### THOU ART MY LUTE

THOU art my lute, by thee I  
sing,—

My being is attuned to thee.  
Thou settest all my words a-wing,  
And meltest me to melody.

Thou art my life, by thee I live,  
From thee proceed the joys I  
know;

Sweetheart, thy hand has power  
to give

The meed of love — the cup of  
woe.

Thou art my love, by thee I lead  
My soul the paths of light along,  
From vale to vale, from mead to  
mead,  
And home it in the hills of song.

My song, my soul, my life, my all,  
Why need I pray or make my  
plea,

Since my petition cannot fall;  
For I'm already one with thee!

### THE PHANTOM KISS

ONE night in my room, still and  
beamless,

With will and with thought in  
eclipse,

I rested in sleep that was dream-  
less;

When softly there fell on my  
lips

A touch, as of lips that were press-  
ing

Mine own with the message of  
bliss —

A sudden, soft, fleeting caressing,  
A breath like a maiden's first  
kiss.

I woke — and the scoffer may  
doubt me —

I peered in surprise through the  
gloom;

But nothing and none were about  
me,

And I was alone in my room.

Perhaps 't was the wind that  
caressed me

And touched me with dew-laden  
breath;

Or, maybe, close-sweeping, there  
passed me

The low-winged Angel of  
Death.

Some sceptic may choose to dis-  
dain it,

Or one feign to read it aright;

Or wisdom may seek to explain  
it —

This mystical kiss in the night.

But rather let fancy thus clear it:

That, thinking of me here alone,

The miles were made naught, and,  
in spirit,

Thy lips, love, were laid on  
mine own.

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

## COMMUNION

IN the silence of my heart,  
I will spend an hour with thee,  
When my love shall rend apart  
All the veil of mystery:

All that dim and misty veil  
That shut in between our souls  
When Death cried, "Ho, maiden,  
hail!"  
And your barque sped on the  
shoals.

On the shoals? Nay, wrongly  
said.

On the breeze of Death that  
sweeps  
Far from life, thy soul has sped  
Out into unsounded deeps.

I shall take an hour and come  
Sailing, darling, to thy side.  
Wind nor sea may keep me from  
Soft communings with my bride.

I shall rest my head on thee  
As I did long days of yore,  
When a calm, untroubled sea  
Rocked thy vessel at the shore.

I shall take thy hand in mine,  
And live o'er the olden days  
When thy smile to me was wine,—  
Golden wine thy word of praise,

For the carols I had wrought  
In my soul's simplicity;

For the petty beads of thought  
Which thine eyes alone could  
see.

Ah, those eyes, love-blind, but keen  
For my welfare and my weal!  
Tho' the grave-door shut between  
Still their love-lights o'er me  
steal.

I can see thee thro' my tears,  
As thro' rain we see the sun.  
What tho' cold and cooling years  
Shall their bitter courses run,—

I shall see thee still and be  
Thy true lover evermore,  
And thy face shall be to me  
Dear and helpful as before.

Death may vaunt and Death may  
boast,  
But we laugh his pow'r to  
scorn;  
He is but a slave at most,—  
Night that heralds coming morn.

I shall spend an hour with thee  
Day by day, my little bride.  
True love laughs at mystery,  
Crying, "Doors of Death, fly  
wide."

## MARE RUBRUM

IN Life's Red Sea with faith I  
plant my feet,  
And wait the sound of that sus-  
taining word

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Which long ago the men of  
Israel heard,  
When Pharaoh's host behind them,  
fierce and fleet,  
Raged on, consuming with re-  
vengeful heat.  
Why are the barrier waters  
still unstirred? —  
That struggling faith may die  
of hope deferred?  
Is God not sitting in His ancient  
seat?

The billows swirl above my trem-  
bling limbs,  
And almost chill my anxious  
heart to doubt  
And disbelief, long conquered  
and defied.  
But tho' the music of my hopeful  
hymns  
Is drowned by curses of the rag-  
ing rout,  
No voice yet bids th' opposing  
waves divide!

### IN AN ENGLISH GARDEN

IN this old garden, fair, I walk  
to-day  
Heart-charmed with all the  
beauty of the scene:  
The rich, luxuriant grasses'  
cooling green,  
The wall's environ, ivy-decked and  
gray,

The waving branches with the  
wind at play,  
The slight and tremulous  
blossoms that show between,  
Sweet all: and yet my yearning  
heart doth lean  
Toward Love's Egyptian flesh-  
pots far away.

Beside the wall, the slim Labur-  
num grows  
And flings its golden flow'rs to  
every breeze.  
But e'en among such soothing  
sights as these,  
I pant and nurse my soul-devour-  
ing woes.  
Of all the longings that our  
hearts wot of,  
There is no hunger like the want  
of love!

### THE CRISIS

A MAN of low degree was sore op-  
pressed,  
Fate held him under iron-handed  
sway,  
And ever, those who saw him  
thus distressed  
Would bid him bend his stub-  
born will and pray.  
But he, strong in himself and ob-  
durate,  
Waged, prayerless, on his losing  
fight with Fate.

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Friends gave his proffered hand  
their coldest clasp,

Or took it not at all; and Pov-  
erty,

That bruised his body with relent-  
less grasp,

Grinned, taunting, when he  
struggled to be free.

But though with helpless hands he  
beat the air,

His need extreme yet found no  
voice in prayer.

Then he prevailed; and forthwith  
snobbish Fate,

Like some whipped cur, came  
fawning at his feet;

Those who had scorned forgave  
and called him great—

His friends found out that  
friendship still was sweet.

But he, once obdurate, now bowed  
his head

In prayer, and trembling with its  
import, said:

“ Mere human strength may stand  
ill-fortune's frown;

So I prevailed, for human  
strength was mine;

But from the killing pow'r of  
great renown,

Naught may protect me save a  
strength divine.

Help me, O Lord, in this my  
trembling cause;

I scorn men's curses, but I dread  
applause!”

## THE CONQUERORS

### THE BLACK TROOPS IN CUBA

ROUND the wide earth, from the  
red field your valour has won,  
Blown with the breath of the far-  
speaking gun,

Goes the word.

Bravely you spoke through the bat-  
tle cloud heavy and dun.

Tossed though the speech toward  
the mist-hidden sun,

The world heard.

Hell would have shrunk from you  
seeking it fresh from the fray,  
Grim with the dust of the battle,  
and gray

From the fight.

Heaven would have crowned you,  
with crowns not of gold but  
of bay,

Owning you fit for the light of  
her day,

Men of night.

Far through the cycle of years and  
of lives that shall come,

There shall speak voices long muf-  
fled and dumb,

Out of fear.

And through the noises of trade  
and the turbulent hum,

Truth shall rise over the militant  
drum,

Loud and clear.

Then on the cheek of the honester  
nation that grows,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

All for their love of you, not for  
your woes,

There shall lie

Tears that shall be to your souls as  
the dew to the rose;

Afterward thanks, that the pres-  
ent yet knows

Not to ply!

### ALEXANDER CRUMMELL — DEAD

BACK to the breast of thy mother,  
Child of the earth!

E'en her caress can not smother

What thou hast done.

Follow the trail of the westering  
sun

Over the earth.

Thy light and his were as one —

Sun, in thy worth.

Unto a nation whose sky was as  
night,

Camest thou, holily, bearing thy  
light:

And the dawn came,

In it thy fame

Flashed up in a flame.

Back to the breast of thy mother —  
To rest.

Long hast thou striven;

Dared where the hills by the light-  
ning of heaven were riven;

Go now, pure shriven.

Who shall come after thee, out of  
the clay —

Learned one and leader to show  
us the way?

Who shall rise up when the world  
gives the test?

Think thou no more of this —  
Rest!

### WHEN ALL IS DONE

WHEN all is done, and my last  
word is said,

And ye who loved me murmur,  
“He is dead,”

Let no one weep, for fear that I  
should know,

And sorrow too that ye should  
sorrow so.

When all is done and in the ooz-  
ing clay,

Ye lay this cast-off hull of mine  
away,

Pray not for me, for, after long  
despair,

The quiet of the grave will be a  
prayer.

For I have suffered loss and  
grievous pain,

The hurts of hatred and the  
world's disdain,

And wounds so deep that love,  
well-tried and pure,

Had not the pow'r to ease them  
or to cure.

When all is done, say not my day  
is o'er,

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

And that thro' night I seek a dimmer shore:

Say rather that my morn has just begun,—

I greet the dawn and not a setting sun,

When all is done.

### THE POET AND THE BABY

How's a man to write a sonnet,  
can you tell,—

How's he going to weave the dim,  
poetic spell,—

When a-toddl'ing on the floor

Is the muse he must adore,

And this muse he loves, not  
wisely, but too well?

Now, to write a sonnet, every one  
allows,

One must always be as quiet as a  
mouse;

But to write one seems to me

Quite superfluous to be,

When you've got a little sonnet  
in the house.

Just a dainty little poem, true and  
fine,

That is full of love and life in  
every line,

Earnest, delicate, and sweet,

Altogether so complete

That I wonder what's the use of  
writing mine.

### DISTINCTION

"I AM but clay," the sinner plead,  
Who fed each vain desire.

"Not only clay," another said,

"But worse, for thou art mire."

### THE SUM

A LITTLE dreaming by the way,  
A little toiling day by day;  
A little pain, a little strife,  
A little joy,—and that is life.

A little short-lived summer's  
morn,

When joy seems all so newly born,  
When one day's sky is blue above,  
And one bird sings,—and that is  
love.

A little sickening of the years,  
The tribute of a few hot tears  
Two folded hands, the failing  
breath,  
And peace at last,—and that is  
death.

Just dreaming, loving, dying so,  
The actors in the drama go —  
A flitting picture on a wall,  
Love, Death, the themes; but is  
that all?



# PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

## SONNET

ON AN OLD BOOK WITH UNCUT  
LEAVES

EMBLEM of blasted hope and lost  
desire,  
No finger ever traced thy yellow page  
Save Time's. Thou hast not  
wrought to noble rage  
The hearts thou wouldst have  
stirred. Not any fire  
Save sad flames set to light a funeral pyre  
Dost thou suggest. Nay,—impotent in age,  
Unsought, thou holdst a corner  
of the stage  
And ceasest even dumbly to aspire.

How different was the thought of  
him that writ.

What promised he to love of  
ease and wealth,

When men should read and kindle  
at his wit.

But here decay eats up the book  
by stealth,

While it, like some old maiden,  
solemnly,

Hugs its incongruous virginity!

## ON THE SEA WALL

SIT upon the old sea wall,  
And watch the shimmering sea,  
Where soft and white the moonbeams fall,

Till, in a fantasy,  
Some pure white maiden's funeral  
pall

The strange light seems to me.

The waters break upon the shore  
And shiver at my feet,

While I dream old dreams o'er  
and o'er,

And dim old scenes repeat;  
Tho' all have dreamed the same  
before,

They still seem new and sweet.

The waves still sing the same old  
song

That knew an elder time;  
The breakers' beat is not more  
strong,

Their music more sublime;  
And poets thro' the ages long  
Have set these notes to rhyme.

But this shall not deter my lyre,  
Nor check my simple strain;

If I have not the old-time fire,  
I know the ancient pain:

The hurt of unfulfilled desire,—  
The ember quenched by rain.

I know the softly shining sea  
That rolls this gentle swell  
Has snarled and licked its tongues  
at me

And bared its fangs as well;  
That 'neath its smile so heavenly,  
There lurks the scowl of hell!

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

But what of that? I strike my  
string

(For songs in youth are sweet);  
I'll wait and hear the waters  
bring

Their loud resounding beat;  
Then, in her own bold numbers  
sing  
The Ocean's dear deceit!

But far and strange, thou still  
dost make them fair.

Now thou dost sing, and I am lost  
in thee

As one who drowns  
In floods of melody.  
Still in thy art  
Give me this part,  
Till perfect love, the love of lov-  
ing crowns.

### TO A LADY PLAYING THE HARP

THY tones are silver melted into  
sound,

And as I dream  
I see no walls around,  
But seem to hear  
A gondolier

Sing sweetly down some slow Ve-  
netian stream.

Italian skies — that I have never  
seen —

I see above.  
(Ah, play again, my queen;  
Thy fingers white  
Fly swift and light  
And weave for me the golden  
mesh of love.)

Oh, thou dusk sorceress of the  
dusky eyes  
And soft dark hair,  
Tis thou that mak'st my skies  
So swift to change  
To far and strange;

### CONFESSIONAL

SEARCH thou my heart;  
If there be guile,  
It shall depart  
Before thy smile.

Search thou my soul;  
Be there deceit,  
'T will vanish whole  
Before thee, sweet.

Upon my mind  
Turn thy pure lens;  
Naught shalt thou find  
Thou canst not cleanse.

If I should pray,  
I scarcely know  
In just what way  
My prayers would go.

So strong in me  
I feel love's leaven,  
I'd bow to thee  
As soon as Heaven!

# PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

## MISAPPREHENSION

OUT of my heart, one day, I  
wrote a song,  
With my heart's blood imbued,  
Instinct with passion, tremulously  
strong,  
With grief subdued;  
Breathing a fortitude  
Pain-bought.  
And one who claimed much love  
for what I wrought,  
Read and considered it,  
And spoke:  
"Ay, brother,—'t is well writ,  
But where's the joke?"

## PROMETHEUS

PROMETHEUS stole from Heaven  
the sacred fire  
And swept to earth with it o'er  
land and sea.  
He lit the vestal flames of poesy,  
Content, for this, to brave celestial ire.

Wroth were the gods, and with  
eternal hate  
Pursued the fearless one who  
ravished Heaven  
That earth might hold in fee  
the perfect leaven  
To lift men's souls above their  
low estate.

But judge you now, when poets  
wield the pen,

Think you not well the wrong  
has been repaired?  
'T was all in vain that ill Prometheus fared:  
The fire has been returned to  
Heaven again!

We have no singers like the ones  
whose note  
Gave challenge to the noblest  
warbler's song.  
We have no voice so mellow,  
sweet, and strong  
As that which broke from Shelley's  
golden throat.

The measure of our songs is our  
desires:  
We tinkle where old poets used  
to storm.  
We lack their substance tho' we  
keep their form:  
We strum our banjo-strings and  
call them lyres.

## LOVE'S PHASES

LOVE hath the wings of the butterfly,  
Oh, clasp him but gently,  
Pausing and dipping and fluttering by  
Inconsequently.  
Stir not his poise with the breath  
of a sigh;  
Love hath the wings of the butterfly.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Love hath the wings of the eagle  
bold,

Cling to him strongly —

What if the look of the world be  
cold,

And life go wrongly?

Rest on his pinions, for broad is  
their fold;

Love hath the wings of the eagle  
bold.

Love hath the voice of the nightin-  
gale,

Hearken his trilling —

List to his song when the moon-  
light is pale,—

Passionate, thrilling.

Cherish the lay, ere the lilt of it  
fail;

Love hath the voice of the nightin-  
gale.

Love hath the voice of the storm  
at night,

Wildly defiant.

Hear him and yield up your soul  
to his might,

Tenderly pliant.

None shall regret him who heed  
him aright;

Love hath the voice of the storm  
at night.

### FOR THE MAN WHO FAILS

THE world is a snob, and the man  
who wins

Is the chap for its money's  
worth;

And the lust for success causes  
half of the sins

That are cursing this brave old  
earth.

For it's fine to go up, and the  
world's applause

Is sweet to the mortal ear;

But the man who fails in a noble  
cause

Is a hero that's no less dear.

'Tis true enough that the laurel  
crown

Twines but for the victor's  
brow;

For many a hero has lain him  
down

With naught but the cypress  
bough.

There are gallant men in the los-  
ing fight,

And as gallant deeds are done

As ever graced the captured  
height

Or the battle grandly won.

We sit at life's board with our  
nerves highstrung,

And we play for the stake of  
Fame,

And our odes are sung and our  
banners hung

For the man who wins the  
game.

But I have a song of another kind

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Than breathes in these fame-  
wrought gales,—  
An ode to the noble heart and  
mind  
Of the gallant man who fails!  
The man who is strong to fight his  
fight,  
And whose will no front can  
daunt,  
If the truth be truth and the right  
be right,  
Is the man that the ages want.  
Tho' he fail and die in grim de-  
feat,  
Yet he has not fled the strife,  
And the house of Earth will seem  
more sweet  
For the perfume of his life.

### HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

SHE told the story, and the whole  
world wept  
At wrongs and cruelties it had  
not known  
But for this fearless woman's  
voice alone.  
She spoke to consciences that  
long had slept:  
Her message, Freedom's clear  
reveille, swept  
From heedless hovel to compla-  
cent throne.  
Command and prophecy were  
in the tone

And from its sheath the sword  
of justice leapt.  
Around two peoples swelled a  
fiery wave,  
But both came forth transfig-  
ured from the flame.  
Blest be the hand that dared be  
strong to save,  
And blest be she who in our  
weakness came —  
Prophet and priestess! At one  
stroke she gave  
A race to freedom and herself  
to fame.

### VAGRANTS

LONG time ago, we two set out,  
My soul and I.  
I know not why,  
For all our way was dim with  
doubt.  
I know not where  
We two may fare:  
Though still with every changing  
weather,  
We wander, groping on together.  
We do not love, we are not  
friends,  
My soul and I.  
He lives a lie;  
Untruth lines every way he wends.  
A scoffer he  
Who jeers at me:

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

And so, my comrade and my  
brother,  
We wander on and hate each  
other.

Ay, there be taverns and to spare,  
Beside the road;  
But some strange goad  
Lets me not stop to taste their  
fare.

Knew I the goal  
Toward which my soul  
And I made way, hope made life  
fragrant:  
But no. We wander, aimless, va-  
grant!

### A WINTER'S DAY

ACROSS the hills and down the  
narrow ways,

And up the valley where the  
free winds sweep,

The earth is folded in an er-  
mined sleep

That mocks the melting mirth of  
myriad Mays.

Departed her disheartening duns  
and grays,

And all her crusty black is cov-  
ered deep.

Dark streams are locked in  
Winter's donjon-keep,

And made to shine with keen, un-  
wonted rays.

O icy mantle, and deceitful snow!  
What world-old liars in your  
hearts ye are!

Are there not still the darkened  
seam and scar

Beneath the brightness that you  
fain would show?

Come from the cover with thy  
blot and blur,

O reeking Earth, thou whited  
sepulchre!

### MY LITTLE MARCH GIRL

COME to the pane, draw the cur-  
tain apart,

There she is passing, the girl of  
my heart;

See where she walks like a queen  
in the street,

Weather-defying, calm, placid and  
sweet.

Tripping along with impetuous  
grace,

Joy of her life beaming out of her  
face,

Tresses all truant-like, curl upon  
curl,

Wind-blown and rosy, my little  
March girl.

Hint of the violet's delicate  
bloom,

Hint of the rose's pervading per-  
fume!

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

How can the wind help from kissing  
her face,—

Wrapping her round in his stormy  
embrace?

But still serenely she laughs at his  
rout,

She is the victor who wins in the  
bout.

So may life's passions about her  
soul swirl,

Leaving it placid,—my little  
March girl.

What self-possession looks out of  
her eyes!

What are the wild winds, and  
what are the skies,

Frowning and glooming when,  
brimming with life,

Cometh the little maid ripe for the  
strife?

Ah! Wind, and bah! Wind, what  
might have you now?

What can you do with that inno-  
cent brow?

Blow, Wind, and grow, Wind,  
and eddy and swirl,

But bring her to me, Wind,—my  
little March girl.

### REMEMBERED

SHE sang, and I listened the  
whole song thro'.

(It was sweet, so sweet, the  
singing.)

The stars were out and the moon  
it grew

From a wee soft glimmer way out  
in the blue

To a bird thro' the heavens  
winging.

She sang, and the song trembled  
down to my breast,—

(It was sweet, so sweet the  
singing.)

As a dove just out of its fledgling  
nest,

And, putting its wings to the first  
sweet test,

Flutters homeward so wearily  
winging.

She sang and I said to my heart  
"That song,

That was sweet, so sweet i' the  
singing,

Shall live with us and inspire us  
long,

And thou, my heart, shalt be brave  
and strong

For the sake of those words  
a-winging.

The woman died and the song  
was still.

(It was sweet, so sweet, the  
singing.)

But ever I hear the same low  
trill,

Of the song that shakes my heart  
with a thrill,

And goes forever winging.



# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

## LOVE DESPOILED

As lone I sat one summer's day,  
With mien dejected, Love  
    came by;  
His face distraught, his locks  
    astray,  
So slow his gait, so sad his eye,  
I hailed him with a pitying cry:

"Pray, Love, what has disturbed  
thee so?"

Said I, amazed. "Thou seem'st  
bereft;  
And see thy quiver hanging  
low,—

What, not a single arrow left?  
Pray, who is guilty of this  
theft?"

Poor Love looked in my face and  
cried:

"No thief were ever yet so bold  
To rob my quiver at my side.  
But Time, who rules, gave ear  
to Gold,  
And all my goodly shafts are  
sold."

## THE LAPSE

THIS poem must be done to-day;  
Then, I'll e'en to it.  
I must not dream my time away,—  
I'm sure to rue it.  
The day is rather bright, I know  
The Muse will pardon

My half-defection, if I go  
Into the garden.  
It must be better working  
there,—  
I'm sure it's sweeter:  
And something in the balmy air  
May clear my metre.

### [*In the Garden.*]

Ah this is noble, what a sky!  
What breezes blowing!  
The very clouds, I know not why,  
Call one to rowing.  
The stream will be a paradise  
To-day, I'll warrant.  
I know the tide that's on the rise  
Will seem a torrent;  
I know just how the leafy boughs  
Are all a-quiver;  
I know how many skiffs and scows  
Are on the river.  
I think I'll just go out awhile  
Before I write it;  
When Nature shows us such a  
smile,  
We should n't slight it.  
For Nature always makes desire  
By giving pleasure;  
And so 't will help me put more  
fire  
Into my measure.

### [*On the River.*]

The river's fine, I'm glad I came,  
That poem's teasing;  
But health is better far than fame,  
Though cheques are pleasing.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

I don't know what I did it for,—  
This air 's a poppy.  
I 'm sorry for my editor,—  
He 'll get no copy!

### THE WARRIOR'S PRAYER

LONG since, in sore distress, I  
heard one pray,  
"Lord, who prevailest with re-  
sistless might,  
Ever from war and strife keep me  
away,  
My battles fight!"

I know not if I play the Pharisee,  
And if my brother after all be  
right;  
But mine shall be the warrior's  
plea to thee—  
Strength for the fight.

I do not ask that thou shalt front  
the fray,  
And drive the warring foeman  
from my sight;  
I only ask, O Lord, by night, by  
day,  
Strength for the fight!

When foes upon me press, let me  
not quail  
Nor think to turn me into  
coward flight.  
I only ask, to make mine arms  
prevail,  
Strength for the fight!

Still let mine eyes look ever on the  
foe,  
Still let mine armor case me  
strong and bright;  
And grant me, as I deal each right-  
eous blow,  
Strength for the fight!

And when, at eventide, the fray  
is done,  
My soul to Death's bedchamber  
do thou light,  
And give me, be the field or lost  
or won,  
Rest from the fight!

### FAREWELL TO ARCADY

WITH sombre mien, the Evening  
gray  
Comes nagging at the heels of  
Day,  
And driven faster and still faster  
Before the dusky-mantled Master,  
The light fades from her fearful  
eyes,  
She hastens, stumbles, falls, and  
dies.

Beside me Amaryllis weeps;  
The swelling tears obscure the  
deeps  
Of her dark eyes, as, mistily,  
The rushing rain conceals the sea.  
Here, lay my tuneless reed away,—  
I have no heart to tempt a lay.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

I scent the perfume of the rose  
Which by my crystal fountain  
grows.

In this sad time, are roses blowing?  
In this sad time, are roses blowing?

And thou, my fountain, art thou  
flowing,

While I who watched thy waters  
spring

Am all too sad to smile or sing?

Nay, give me back my pipe again,  
It yet shall breathe this single  
strain:

Farewell to Arcady!

### THE VOICE OF THE BANJO

IN a small and lonely cabin out  
of noisy traffic's way,

Sat an old man, bent and feeble,  
dusk of face, and hair of gray,

And beside him on the table, battered,  
old, and worn as he,

Lay a banjo, droning forth this  
reminiscent melody:

"Night is closing in upon us,  
friend of mine, but don't be  
sad;

Let us think of all the pleasures  
and the joys that we have had.

Let us keep a merry visage, and be  
happy till the last,

Let the future still be sweetened  
with the honey of the past.

"For I speak to you of summer  
nights upon the yellow sand;

When the Southern moon was  
sailing high and silvering all  
the land;

And if love tales were not sacred  
there's a tale that I could  
tell

Of your many nightly wanderings  
with a dusk and lovely belle;

"And I speak to you of care-free  
songs when labour's hour was  
o'er,

And a woman waiting for your  
step outside the cabin door,

And of something roly-poly that  
you took upon your lap,

While you listened for the stum-  
bling, hesitating words, 'Pap,  
pap.'

"I could tell you of a 'possum  
hunt across the wooded  
grounds,

I could call to mind the sweetness  
of the baying of the hounds,

You could lift me up and smelling  
of the timber that's in me,

Build again a whole green forest  
with the mem'ry of a tree.

"So the future cannot hurt us  
while we keep the past in  
mind,

What care I for trembling fingers  
— what care you that you are  
blind?

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Time may leave us poor and  
stranded, circumstance may  
make us bend;  
But they'll only find us mellowed,  
won't they, comrade? — in  
the end."

### THE STIRRUP CUP

COME, drink a stirrup cup with me,  
Before we close our rouse.  
You're all aglow with wine, I  
know:

The master of the house,  
Unmindful of our revelry,  
Has drowned the carking devil  
care,  
And slumbers in his chair.

COME, drink a cup before we start;  
We've far to ride to-night.  
And Death may take the race we  
make,  
And check our gallant flight:  
But even he must play his part,  
And tho' the look he wears be  
grim,  
We'll drink a toast to him!

For Death,— a swift old chap is  
he,

And swift the steed He rides.  
He needs no chart o'er main or  
mart,  
For no direction bides.  
So, come, a final cup with me,  
And let the soldiers' chorus  
swell,—

To hell with care, to hell!

### A CHOICE

THEY please me not — these  
solemn songs  
That hint of sermons covered up.  
'T is true the world should heed  
its wrongs,

But in a poem let me sup,  
Not simples brewed to cure or  
ease

Humanity's confessed disease,  
But the spirit-wine of a singing  
line,

Or a dew-drop in a honey cup!



# **HUMOUR AND DIALECT**





## THEN AND NOW

### THEN

He loved her, and through many  
years,  
Had paid his fair devoted court,  
Until she wearied, and with sneers  
Turned all his ardent love to sport.  
That night within his chamber  
lone,  
He long sat writing by his bed  
A note in which his heart made  
moan  
For love; the morning found him  
dead.

### NOW

Like him, a man of later day  
Was silted by the maid he sought,  
And from her presence turned  
away,  
Consumed by burning, bitter  
thought.  
He sought his room to write — a  
curse  
Like him before and die, I ween.  
Ah no, he put his woes in verse,  
And sold them to a magazine.

## AT CHESHIRE CHEESE

When first of wise old Johnson  
taught,  
My youthful mind its homage  
brought,

And made the pond'rous crusty  
sage

The object of a noble rage.

Nor did I think (How dense we  
are!)

That any day, however far,  
Would find me holding, unre-  
pelled,

The place that Doctor Johnson  
held!

But change has come and time has  
moved,

And now, applauded, unreprieved,  
I hold, with pardonable pride,  
The place that Johnson occupied.

Conceit! Presumption! What is  
this?

You surely read my words amiss;  
Like Johnson I,—a man of mind?  
How could you ever be so blind?

No. At the ancient "Cheshire  
Cheese,"

Blown hither by some vagrant  
breeze,

To dignify my shallow wit,  
In Doctor Johnson's seat I sit!

## MY CORN-COB PIPE

Men may sing of their Havanas,  
elevating to the stars  
The real or fancied virtues of their  
foreign-made cigars;

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

But I worship Nicotina at a different sort of shrine,  
And she sits enthroned in glory in this corn-cob pipe of mine.

It's as fragrant as the meadows when the clover is in bloom;  
It's as dainty as the essence of the daintiest perfume;

It's as sweet as are the orchards when the fruit is hanging ripe,  
With the sun's warm kiss upon them — is this corn-cob pipe.

Thro' the smoke about it clinging,  
I delight its form to trace,  
Like an oriental beauty with a veil upon her face;

And my room is dim with vapour as a church when censers sway,

As I clasp it to my bosom — in a figurative way.

It consoles me in misfortune and it cheers me in distress,

And it proves a warm partaker of my pleasures in success;

So I hail it as a symbol, friendship's true and worthy type,

And I press my lips devoutly to my corn-cob pipe.

### IN AUGUST

WHEN August days are hot an' dry,

When burning copper is the sky,

I'd rather fish than feast or fly  
In airy realms serene and high.

I'd take a suit not made for looks,  
Some easily digested books,  
Some flies, some lines, some bait,  
some hooks,  
Then would I seek the bays and brooks.

I would eschew mine every task,  
In Nature's smiles my soul should bask,

And I methinks no more could ask,

Except — perhaps — one little flask.

In case of accident, you know,  
Or should the wind come on to blow,

Or I be chilled or capsized, so,  
A flask would be the only go.

Then could I spend a happy time,—

A bit of sport, a bit of rhyme  
(A bit of lemon, or of lime,  
To make my bottle's contents prime).

When August days are hot an' dry,

I won't sit by an' sigh or die,  
I'll get my bottle (on the sly)  
And go ahead, and fish, and lie!

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

### THE DISTURBER

OH, what shall I do? I am wholly  
upset;  
I am sure I'll be jailed for a  
lunatic yet.  
I'll be out of a job—it's the  
thing to expect  
When I'm letting my duty go by  
with neglect.  
You may judge the extent and de-  
gree of my plight  
When I'm thinking all day and  
a-dreaming all night,  
And a-trying my hand at a rhyme  
on the sly,  
All on account of a sparkling eye.

There are those who say men  
should be strong, well-a-day!  
But what constitutes strength in  
a man? Who shall say?  
I am strong as the most when it  
comes to the arm.  
I have aye held my own on the  
playground or farm.  
And when I've been tempted, I  
have n't been weak;  
But now—why, I tremble to  
hear a maid speak.  
I used to be bold, but now I've  
grown shy,  
And all on account of a sparkling  
eye.

There once was a time when my  
heart was devout,

But now my religion is open to  
doubt.  
When parson is earnestly preach-  
ing of grace,  
My fancy is busy with drawing  
a face,  
Thro' the back of a bonnet most  
piously plain;  
'I draw it, redraw it, and draw  
it again.'  
While the songs and the sermon  
unheeded go by,—  
All on account of a sparkling eye.  
Oh, dear little conjurer, give o'er  
your wiles,  
It is easy for you, you're all  
blushes and smiles:  
But, love of my heart, I am sorely  
perplexed;  
I am smiling one minute and sigh-  
ing the next;  
And if it goes on, I'll drop hackle  
and flail,  
And go to the parson and tell him  
my tale.  
I warrant he'll find me a cure  
for the sigh  
That you're aye bringing forth  
with the glance of your eye.

### EXPECTATION

YOU'LL be wonderin' whut's de  
reason  
I's a grinnin' all de time,  
An' I guess you t'ink my sperits  
Mus' be feelin' mighty prime.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Well, I 'fess up, I is tickled  
As a puppy at his paws.  
But you need n't think I's crazy,  
I ain' laffin' 'dout a cause.

You's a wonderin' too, I reckon,  
Why I does n't seem to eat,  
An' I notice you a lookin'  
Lak you felt completely beat  
When I 'fuse to tek de bacon,  
An' don' settle on de ham.  
Don' you feel no feah erbout me,  
Jes' keep eatin', an' be ca'm.

Fu' I's waitin' an' I's watchin'  
'Bout a little t'ing I see —  
D' othah night I's out a walkin'  
An' I passed a 'simmon tree.  
Now I's whettin' up my hongry,  
An' I's laffin' fit to kill,  
Fu' de fros' done turned de 'sim-  
mons,  
An' de possum 's eat his fill.

He done go'ged hisse'f owdacious,  
An' he stayin' by de tree!  
Don' you know, ol' Mistah Pos-  
sum

Dat you gittin' fat fu' me?  
'Tain't no use to try to 'spute it,  
'Case I knows you's gittin'  
sweet  
Wif dat 'simmon flavoh thoo you,  
So I's waitin' fu' yo' meat.

An' some ebenin' me an Towsah  
Gwine to come an' mek a call,

We jes' drap in onexpected  
Fu' to shek yo' han', dat 's all.  
Oh, I knows dat you'll be tickled,  
Seems lak I kin see you smile,  
So pu'haps I mought pu'suade you  
Fu' to visit us a while.

### LOVER'S LANE

SUMMAH night an' sighin' breeze,  
'Long de lovah's lane;  
Frien'ly, shadder-mekin' trees,  
'Long de lovah's lane.  
White folks' wo'k all done up  
gran'—  
Me an' 'Mandy han'-in-han'  
Struttin' lak we owned de lan',  
'Long de lovah's lane.

Owl a-settin' 'side de road,  
'Long de lovah's lane,  
Lookin' at us lak he knowed  
Dis uz lovah's lane.  
Go on, hoot yo' 'mou'nful tune,  
You ain' nevah loved in June,  
An' come hidin' f'om de moon  
Down in lovah's lane.

Bush it ben' an' nod an' sway,  
Down in lovah's lane,  
Try'n' to hyeah me whut I say  
'Long de lovah's lane.  
But I whispahs low lak dis,  
An' my 'Mandy smile huh bliss—  
Mistah Bush he shek his fis',  
Down in lovah's lane.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Whut I keer ef day is long,  
Down in lovah's lane.  
I kin allus sing a song  
'Long de lovah's lane.  
An' de wo'ds I hyeah an' say  
Meks up fu' de weary day  
W'en I's strollin' by de way,  
Down in lovah's lane.

An' dis t'ought will allus rise  
Down in lovah's lane;  
Wondah whethah in de skies  
Dey's a lovah's lane.  
Ef dey ain't, I tell you true,  
'Ligion do look mighty blue,  
'Cause I do' know whut I'd do  
'Dout a lovah's lane.

### PROTEST

WHO say my hea't ain't true to  
you?

Dey bettah heish dey mouf.  
I knows I loves you thoo an' thoo  
In watah time er drouf.  
I wush dese people'd stop dey  
talkin',  
Don't mean no mo' dan chicken's  
squawkin':  
I guess I knows which way I's  
walkin',  
I knows de norf f'om souf.

I does not love Elizy Brown,  
I guess I knows my min'.  
You allus try to tek me down  
Wid evaht'ing you fin'.

Ef dese hyeah folks will keep on  
fillin'

Yo' haid wid nonsense, an' you's  
willin'

I bet some day dey 'll be a killin'  
Somewhah along de line.

O' cose I buys de gal ice-cream,  
Whut else I gwine to do?

I knows jes' how de t'ing 'u'd  
seem

Ef I'd be sho't wid you.

On Sunday, you's at chu'ch  
a-shoutin',

Den all de week you go 'roun'  
poutin'—

I's mighty tiahed o' all dis  
doubtin',

I tell you cause I's true.

### HYMN

O LI'L' lamb out in de col',  
De Mastah call you to de fol',  
O li'l' lamb!

He hyeah you bleatin' on de hill;  
Come hyeah an' keep yo' mou'nin'  
still,

O li'l' lamb!

De Mastah sen' de Shepud fo'f;  
He wandah souf, he wandah no'f,  
O li'l' lamb!

He wandah eas', he wandah  
wes';

De win' a-wrenchin' at his breas',  
O li'l' lamb!

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Oh, tell de Shepud whaih you hide;  
He want you walkin' by his side,  
O li'l' lamb!

He know you weak, he know you  
so';

But come, don' stay away no mo',  
O li'l' lamb!

An' af'ah while de lamb he hyeah  
De Shepud's voice a-callin' cleah —  
Sweet li'l' lamb!

He ansawah f'om de brambles thick,  
"O Shepud, I's a-comin' quick"—  
O li'l' lamb!

### LITTLE BROWN BABY

LITTLE brown baby wif spa'klin'  
eyes,

Come to yo' pappy an' set on his  
knee.

What you been doin', suh — mak-  
in' san' pies?

Look at dat bib — you's ez  
du'ty ez me.

Look at dat mouf — dat's mer-  
lasses, I bet;

Come hyeah, Maria, an' wipe  
off his han's.

Bees gwine to ketch you an' eat  
you up yit,

Bein' so sticky an sweet — good-  
ness lan's!

Little brown baby wif spa'klin'  
eyes,

Who's pappy's darlin' an'  
who's pappy's chile?

Who is it all de day nevah once  
tries

Fu' to be cross, er once loses dat  
smile?

Whah did you git dem teef? My,  
you's a scamp!

Whah did dat dimple come f'om  
in yo' chin?

Pappy do' know you — I b'lieves  
you's a tramp;

Mammy, dis hyeah's some ol'  
straggler got in!

Let's th'ow him outen de do' in  
de san',

We do' want stragglers a-layin'  
'roun' hyeah;

Let's gin him 'way to de big  
buggah-man;

I know he's hidin' erroun'  
hyeah right neah.

Buggah-man, buggah-man, come  
in de do',

Hyeah's a bad boy you kin have  
fu' to eat.

Mammy an' pappy do' want him  
no mo',

Swaller him down f'om his haid  
to his feet!

Dah, now, I t'ought dat you'd  
hug me up close.

Go back, ol' buggah, you sha'n't  
have dis boy.

He ain't no tramp, ner no strag-  
gler, of co'se;

He's pappy's pa'dner an' play-  
mate an' joy.



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Come to you' pallet now — go to  
yo' res';

Wisht you could allus know  
ease an' cleah skies;

Wisht you could stay jes' a chile  
on my breas'—

Little brown baby wif spa'klin'  
eyes!

### TIME TO TINKER 'ROUN'!

SUMMAH 's nice, wif sun a-shinin',  
Spring is good wif greens and  
grass,

An' dey's some t'ings nice 'bout  
wintah,

Dough hit brings de freezin'  
blas;

But de time dat is de fines',

Whethah fiel's is green er brown,  
Is w'en de rain 's a-po'in'

An' dey's time to tinker 'roun.

Den you men's de mule's ol'  
ha'ness,

An' you men's de broken chair.  
Hummin' all de time you 's wo'kin'

Some ol' common kind o' air.

Evah now an' then you looks out,  
Tryin' mighty ha'd to frown,

But you cain't, you 's glad hit 's  
rainin',

An' dey's time to tinker 'roun'.

Oh, you 'ten's lak you so anxious  
Evah time it so't o' stops.

W'en hit goes on, den you reckon  
Dat de wet 'll he'p de crops.

But hit ain't de crops you 's aftah;

You knows w'en de rain comes  
down

Dat 's hit 's too wet out fu'  
wo'kin',

An' dey's time to tinker roun'.

Oh, dey's fun inside de co'n-crib,

An' dey's laffin' at de ba'n;

An' dey's allus some one jokin',

Er some one to tell a ya'n.

Dah 's a quiet in yo' cabin,

Only fu' de rain's sof' soun';

So you 's mighty blessed happy

W'en dey's time to tinker  
'roun'!

### THE REAL QUESTION

FOLKS is talkin' 'bout de money,  
'bout de silvah an' de gold;

All de time de season 's changin'  
an' de days is gittin' cold.

An' dey's wond'rin' 'bout de  
metals, whethah we'll have  
one er two.

While de price o' coal is risin' an'  
dey's two months' rent  
dat 's due.

Some folks says dat gold 's de only  
money dat is wuff de name,

Den de othahs rise an' tell 'em  
dat dey ought to be ashame,



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

An' dat silvah is de only thing to  
save us f'om de powah .

Of de gold-bug ragin' 'roun' an'  
seekin' who he may de-  
vowah.

Well, you folks kin keep on  
shoutin' wif yo' gold er  
silvah cry,

But I tell you people hams is  
sceerce an' fowls is roostin'  
high.

An' hit ain't de so't o' money dat  
is pesterin' my min',

But de question I want answehed 's  
how to get at any kin'!

### JILTED

LUCY done gone back on me,  
Dat 's de way wif life.

Evaht'ing was movin' free,  
T'ought I had my wife.

Den some dahky comes along,  
Sings my gal a little song,

Since den, evaht'ing 's gone wrong,  
Evah day dey 's strife.

Did n't answeh me to-day,  
W'en I called huh name,

Would you t'ink she 'd ac' dat way  
W'en I ain't to blame?

Dat 's de way dese women do,  
W'en dey fin's a fellow true,

Den dey 'buse him thoo an' thoo;  
Well, hit 's all de same.

Somep'n's wrong erbout my lung,  
An' I 's glad hit 's so.

Doctah says 'at I 'll die young,  
Well, I wants to go!

Whut 's de use o' livin' hyeah,  
W'en de gal you loves so deah,  
Goes back on you clean an' cleah —  
I sh'd like to know?

### THE NEWS

WHUT dat you whisperin' keepin'  
f'om me?

Don't shut me out 'cause I 's ol'  
an' can't see.

Somep'n's gone wrong dat 's  
a-causin' you dread,—

Don't be afear'd to tell — Whut!  
mastah dead?

Somebody brung de news early  
to-day,—

One of de sojers he led, do you  
say?

Did n't he foller whah ol' mastah  
lead?

How kin he live w'en his leadah  
is dead?

Let me lay down awhile, dah by  
his bed;

I wants to t'ink,— hit ain't cleah  
in my head:—

Killed while a-leadin' his men into  
fight,—

Dat 's whut you said, ain't it, did  
I hyeah right?

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Mastah, my mastah, dead dah in  
de fiel'?

Lif' me up some,—dah, jes' so I  
kin kneel.

I was too weak to go wid him, dey  
said,

Well, now I 'll — fin' him — so —  
mastah is dead.

Yes, suh, I 's comin' ez fas' ez I  
kin,—

'T was kin' o' da'k, but hit 's  
lightah agin:

P'omised yo' pappy I 'd allus tek  
keer

Of you,—yes, mastah,—I 's fol-  
lerin',—hyeah!

### CHRISMUS ON THE PLAN- TATION

It was Chrismus Eve, I mind hit  
fu' a mighty gloomy day —

Bofe de weathah an' de people —  
not a one of us was gay;

Cose you 'll t'ink dat 's mighty  
funny 'twell I try to mek hit  
cleah,

Fu' a da'ky 's allus happy when de  
holidays is neah.

But we was n't, fu' dat mo'nin'  
Mastah 'd tol' us we mus' go,

He 'd been payin' us sence free-  
dom, but he could n't pay no  
mo';

He wa'n't nevah used to plannin'  
'fo' he got so po' an' ol',

So he gwine to give up tryin', an'  
de homestead mus' be sol'.

I kin see him stan'in' now erpon  
de step ez cleah ez day,

Wid de win' a-kind o' fondlin'  
thoo his haih all thin an'  
gray;

An' I 'membah how he trimbled  
when he said, "It 's ha'd fu'  
me,

Not to mek yo' Chrismus brightah,  
but I 'low it wa'n't to be."

All de women was a-cryin', an' de  
men, too, on de sly,

An' I noticed somep'n shinin' even  
in ol' Mastah's eye.

But we all stood still to listen ez  
ol' Ben come f'om de crowd

An' spoke up, a-try'n' to steady  
down his voice and mek it  
loud:—

"Look hyeah, Mastah, I 's been  
servin' you' fu' lo! dese many  
yeahs,

An' now, sence we 's got freedom  
an' you 's kind o' po', hit  
'pears

Dat you want us all to leave you  
'cause you don't t'ink you can  
pay.

Ef my membry has n't fooled me,  
seem dat whut I hyead you  
say.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

"Er in othah wo'ds, you wants us  
to fu'git dat you 's been kin',  
An' ez soon ez you is he'pless, we's  
to leave you hyeah behin'.

Well, ef dat 's de way dis freedom  
ac's on people, white er black,  
You kin jes' tell Mistah Lincum  
fu' to tek his freedom back.

"We gwine wo'k dis ol' planta-  
tion fu' whatevah we kin git,  
Fu' I know hit did suppo't us, an'  
de place kin do it yit.

Now de land is yo's, de hands is  
ouahs, an' I reckon we'll be  
brave,

An' we'll bah ez much ez you do  
w'en we has to scrape an'  
save."

Ol' Mastah stood dah trimblin',  
but a-smilin' thoo his teahs,  
An' den hit seemed jes' nachul-  
like, de place fah rung wid  
cheahs,

An' soon ez dey was quiet, some  
one sta'ted sof' an' low:

"Praise God," an' den we all  
jined in, "from whom all  
blessin's flow!"

Well, dey was n't no use tryin',  
ouah min's was sot to stay,

An' po' ol' Mastah could n't plead  
ner baig, ner drive us 'way,

An' all at once, hit seemed to us,  
de day was bright agin,

So evahone was gay dat night, an'  
watched de Chrismus in.

### ANGELINA

WHEN de fiddle gits to singin' out  
a ol' Vahginny reel,

An' you 'mence to feel a ticklin' in  
yo' toe an' in yo' heel;

Ef you t'ink you got 'uligion an'  
you wants to keep it, too,

You jes' bettah tek a hint an' git  
yo'self clean out o' view.

Case de time is mighty temptin'  
when de chune is in de  
swing,

Fu' a darky, saint or sinner man,  
to cut de pigeon-wing.

An' you could n't he'p f'om danc-  
in' ef yo' feet was boun' wif  
twine,

When Angelina Johnson comes  
a-swingin' down de line.

Don't you know Miss Angelina?  
She 's de da'lin' of de place.

W'y, dey ain't no high-toned lady  
wif sich mannahts an' sich  
grace.

She kin move across de cabin, wif  
its planks all rough an' wo';

Jes' de same 's ef she was dancin'  
on ol' mistus' ball-room flo'.

Fact is, you do' see no cabin—  
evaht'ing you see look grand,

An' dat one ol' squeaky fiddle  
soun' to you jes' lak a ban';

Cotton britches look lak broadclop  
an' a linsey dress look fine,

When Angelina Johnson comes  
a-swingin' down de line.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Some folks say dat dancin's sinful,  
an' de blessed Lawd, dey say,

Gwine to punish us fu' steppin'  
w'en we hyeah de music play.

But I tell you I don' b'lieve it, fu'  
de Lawd is wise and good,

An' he made de banjo's metal an'  
he made de fiddle's wood,

An' he made de music in dem, so  
I don' quite t'ink he'll keer

Ef our feet keeps time a little to  
de melodies we hyeah.

W'y, dey's somep'n' downright  
holy in de way our faces  
shine,

When Angelina Johnson comes  
a-swingin' down de line.

Angelina steps so gentle, Angelina  
bows so low,

An' she lif' huh sku't so dainty dat  
huh shoetop skacely show:

An' dem teef o' huh'n a-shinin', ez  
she tek you by de han'—

Go 'way, people, d' ain't anothah  
sich a lady in de lan'!

When she's movin' thoo de figgers  
er a-dancin' by huhse'f,

Folks jes' stan' stock-still a-sta'-  
in', an' dey mos' nigh hol's  
dey bref;

An' de young mens, dey's a-sayin',  
"I's gwine mek dat damsel  
mine,"

When Angelina Johnson comes  
a-swingin' down de line.

## FOOLIN' WID DE SEASONS

SEEMS lak folks is mighty curus

In de way dey t'inks an' ac's.

Dey jes' spen's dey days a-mixin'

Up de t'ings in almanacs.

Now, I min' my nex' do' neigh-  
bour,—

He's a mighty likely man,

But he nevah t'inks o' nuffin

'Ceptin' jes' to plot an' plan.

All de wintah he was plannin'

How he'd gettah sassafras

Jes' ez soon ez evah Springtime

Put some greenness in de grass.

An' he 'lowed a little soonah

He could stan' a coolah breeze

So's to mek a little money

F'om de sugah-watah trees.

In de summah, he'd be waihin'

Out de linin' of his soul,

Try 'n' ca'ci'late an' fashion

How he'd git his wintah coal;

An' I b'lieve he got his jedgement

Jes' so tuckahed out an' thinned

Dat he t'ought a robin's whistle

Was de whistle of de wind.

Why won't folks gin up dey plan-  
nin',

An' jes' be content to know

Dat dey's gittin' all dat's fu' dem

In de days dat come an' go?

Why won't folks quit movin' for-  
rard?

Ain't hit bettah jes' to stan'

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

An' be satisfied wid livin'  
In de season dat 's at han'?

Hit's enough fu' me to listen  
W'en de birds is singin' 'roun',  
'Dout a-guessin' whut 'll happen  
W'en de snow is on de groun'.  
In de Springtime an' de summah,  
I lays sorrer on de she'f;  
An' I knows ol' Mistah Wintah  
Gwine to hustle fu' hisse'f.

We been put hyeah fu' a pu'pose,  
But de questun dat has riz  
An' made lots o' people diffah  
Is jes' whut dat pu'pose is.  
Now, accordin' to my reas'nin',  
Hyeah 's de p'int whaih I's  
arriv,  
Sence de Lawd put life into us,  
We was put hyeah fu' to live!

### MY SORT O' MAN

I DON'T believe in 'ristercrats  
An' never did, you see;  
The plain ol' homelike sorter folks  
Is good enough fur me.  
O' course, I don't desire a man  
To be too tarnal rough,  
But then, I think all folks should  
know  
When they air nice enough.

Now there is folks in this here  
world,  
From peasant up to king,

Who want to be so awful nice  
They overdo the thing.  
That's jest the thing that makes  
me sick,  
An' quicker 'n a wink  
I set it down that them same  
folks  
Ain't half so good 's you  
think.

I like to see a man dress nice,  
In clothes becomin' too;  
I like to see a woman fix  
As women orter to do;  
An' boys an' gals I like to see  
Look fresh an' young an'  
spry,—  
We all must have our vanity  
An' pride before we die.

But I jedge no man by his  
clothes,—  
Nor gentleman nor tramp;  
The man that wears the finest suit  
May be the biggest scamp,  
An' he whose limbs air clad in rags  
That make a mournful sight,  
In life's great battle may have  
proved  
A hero in the fight.

I don't believe in 'ristercrats;  
I like the honest tan  
That lies upon the healthful cheek  
An' speaks the honest man;  
I like to grasp the brawny hand  
That labor's lips have kissed,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

For he who has not labored here  
Life's greatest pride has  
missed:

The pride to feel that yore own  
strength

Has cleaved fur you the way  
To heights to which you were not  
born,

But struggled day by day.  
What though the thousands sneer  
an' scoff,

An' scorn yore humble birth?  
Kings are but puppets; you are  
king  
By right o' royal worth.

The man who simply sits an' waits  
Fur good to come along,  
Ain't worth the breath that one  
would take

To tell him he is wrong.  
Fur good ain't flowin' round this  
world

Fur every fool to sup;  
You 've got to put yore see-ers on,  
An' go an' hunt it up.

Good goes with honesty, I say,  
To honour an' to bless;  
To rich an' poor alike it brings  
A wealth o' happiness.

The 'ristercrats ain't got it all,  
Fur much to their su'prise,  
That's one of earth's most blessed  
things

They can't monopolize.

## POSSUM

Ef dey's anyt'ing dat riles me  
An' jes' gits me out o' hitch,  
Twell I want to tek my coat off,  
So 's to r'ar an' t'ar an' pitch,  
Hit's to see some ign'ant white  
man

'Mittin' dat owdacious sin —  
W'en he want to cook a possum  
Tekin' off de possum's skin.

W'y dey ain't no use in talkin',  
Hit jes' hu'ts me to de hea't  
Fu' to see dem foolish people

Th'owin' 'way de fines' pa't.  
W'y, dat skin is jes' ez tendah  
An' ez juicy ez kin be;  
I knows all erbout de critter —  
Hide an' haih — don't talk to  
me!

Possum skin is jes lak shoat skin;  
Jes' you swinge an' scrope it  
down,

Tek a good sha'p knife an' sco' it,  
Den you bake it good an' brown.  
Huh-uh! honey, you 's so happy  
Dat yo' thoughts is 'mos' a sin  
When you 's sertin' dah a-chawin'  
On dat possum's cracklin' skin.

White folks t'ink dey know 'bout  
eatin',

An' I reckon dat dey do  
Sometimes git a little idee  
Of a middlin' dish er two;



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

But dey ain't a t'ing dey knows of  
Dat I reckon cain't be beat  
W'en we set down at de table  
To a unskun possum's meat!

### ON THE ROAD

I's boun' to see my gal to-night —  
Oh, lone de way, my dearie!  
De moon ain't out, de stars ain't  
bright —

Oh, lone de way, my dearie!  
Dis hoss o' mine is pow'ful slow,  
But when I does git to yo' do'  
Yo' kiss 'll pay me back, an' mo',  
Dough lone de way, my dearie.

De night is skeery-lak an' still —  
Oh, lone de way, my dearie!  
'Cept fu' dat mou'nful whippo'-  
will —

Oh, lone de way, my dearie!  
De way so long wif dis slow pace,  
'T'u'd seem to me lak savin' grace  
Ef you was on a nearer place,  
Fu' lone de way, my dearie.

I hyeah de hootin' of de owl —  
Oh, lone de way, my dearie!  
I wish dat watch-dog would n't  
howl —

Oh, lone de way, my dearie!  
An' evaht'ing, bofe right an' lef',  
Seem p'int'ly lak hit put itse'f  
In shape to skeer me half to def —  
Oh, lone de way, my dearie!

I whistles so 's I won't be feared —  
Oh lone de way, my dearie!  
But anyhow I's kin' o' skeered,  
Fu' lone de way, my dearie.  
De sky been lookin' mighty glum,  
But you kin mek hit lighten some,  
Ef you 'll jes' say you's glad I  
come,

Dough lone de way, my dearie.

### A DEATH SONG

LAY me down beneaf de willers in  
de grass,  
Whah de branch 'll go a-singin' as  
it pass.

An' w'en I's a-layin' low,  
I kin hyeah it as it go  
Singin', "Sleep, my honey, tek yo'  
res' at las'."

Lay me nigh to whah hit meks a  
little pool,  
An' de watah stan's so quiet lak  
an' cool,

Whah de little birds in spring,  
Ust to come an' drink an' sing,  
An' de chillen waded on dey way  
to school.

Let me settle w'en my shouldahs  
draps dey load  
Nigh enough to hyeah de noises in  
de road;

Fu' I t'ink de las' long res'  
Gwine to soothe my sperrit bes'  
Ef I's layin' 'mong de t'ings I's  
allus knowed.



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

### A BACK-LOG SONG

DE axes has been ringin' in de  
woods de blessid day,  
An' de chips has been a-fallin'  
fa' an' thick;  
Dey has cut de bigges' hick'ry dat  
de mules kin tote away,  
An' dey's laid hit down and  
soaked it in de crik.  
Den dey tuk hit to de big house an'  
dey piled de wood erroun'  
In de fiah-place f'om ash-flo' to  
de flue,  
While ol' Ezry sta'ts de hymn dat  
evah yeah has got to soun'  
When de back-log fus' com-  
mence a-bu'nin' thoo.

Ol' Mastah is a-smilin' on de  
da'kies f'om de hall,  
Ol' Mistus is a-stannin' in de do',  
An' de young folks, males an'  
misses, is a-tryin', one an'  
all,  
Fu' to mek us feel hit's Chris-  
mus time fu' sho'.  
An' ouah hea'ts are full of pleasure,  
fu' we know de time is  
ouahs  
Fu' to dance er do jes' whut we  
wants to do.  
An' dey ain't no ovahseer an' no  
othah kind o' powahs  
Dat kin stop us while dat log  
is bu'nin' thoo.

Dey's a-wokin' in de qua'tahs a-  
preparin' fu' de feas',  
So de little pigs is feelin' kind o'  
shy.  
De chickens ain't so trus'ful ez  
dey was, to say de leas',  
An' de wise ol' hens is roostin'  
mighty high.  
You could n't git a gobblah fu' to  
look you in de face —  
I ain't sayin' whut de tu'ky  
'spects is true;  
But hit's mighty dange'ous trav'-  
lin' fu' de critters on de  
place  
F'om de time dat log commence a  
bu'nin' thoo.

Some one's tunin' up his fiddle  
dah, I hyeah a banjo's ring,  
An', bless me, dat's de tootin' of  
a ho'n!  
Now dey'll evah one be runnin'  
dat has got a foot to fling,  
An' dey'll dance an' frolic on  
f'om now 'twell mo'n.  
Plunk de banjo, scrap de fiddle,  
blow dat ho'n yo' level bes',  
Keep yo' min' erpon de chune  
an' step it true.  
Oh, dey ain't no time fu' stoppin'  
an' dey ain't no time fu'  
res',  
Fu' hit's Christmas an' de back-  
log's bu'nin' thoo!

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

## LULLABY

BEDTIME 's come fu' little boys.  
Po' little lamb.  
Too tiahed out to make a noise,  
Po' little lamb.  
You gwine t' have to-morrer sho'?  
Yes, you tole me dat befo',  
Don't you fool me, chile, no mo',  
Po' little lamb.

You been bad de livelong day,  
Po' little lamb.  
Th'owin' stones an' runnin' 'way,  
Po' little lamb.  
My, but you 's a-runnin' wil',  
Look jes' lak some po' folks chile;  
Mam' gwine whup you atter while,  
Po' little lamb.

Come hyeah! you mos' tiahed to  
def,  
Po' little lamb.  
Played yo'se'f clean out o' bref,  
Po' little lamb.  
See dem han's now — sich a sight!  
Would you evah b'lieve dey's  
white?  
Stan' still twell I wash 'em right,  
Po' little lamb.

Jes' cain't hol' yo' haid up straight,  
Po' little lamb.  
Had n't oughter played so late,  
Po' little lamb.  
Mammy do' know whut she 'd do,  
Ef de chillun's all lak you;  
You 's a caution now fu' true,  
Po' little lamb.

Lay yo' haid down in my lap,  
Po' little lamb.  
Y' ought to have a right good slap,  
Po' little lamb.  
You been runnin' roun' a heap.  
Shet dem eyes an' don't you peep,  
Dah now, dah now, go to sleep,  
Po' little lamb.

## THE PHOTOGRAPH

SEE dis pictyah in my han'?  
Dat 's my gal;  
Ain't she purty? goodness lan'!  
Huh name Sal.  
Dat 's de very way she be —  
Kin' o' tickles me to see  
Huh a-smilin' back at me.

She sont me dis photygraph  
Jes' las' week;  
An' aldough hit made me laugh —  
My black cheek  
Felt somethin' a-runnin' queer;  
Bless yo' soul, it was a tear  
Jes' f'om wishin' she was here.

Often when I 's all alone  
Layin' here,  
I git t'inkin' 'bout my own  
Sallie dear;  
How she say dat I 's huh beau,  
An' hit tickles me to know  
Dat de gal do love me so.  
Some bright day I 's goin' back,  
Fo' de la!

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

An' ez sho' 's my face is black,  
Ax huh pa  
Fu' de blessed little miss  
Who 's a-smilin' out o dis  
Pictyah, lak she wan'ed a kiss!

Second hand to boot,  
I 's a-tryin' to spite you!  
Full of jealousy!  
Look hyeah, man, I 'll fight  
you,  
Don't you fool wid me!

### JEALOUS

HYEAH come Cæsar Higgins,  
Don't he think he 's fine?  
Look at dem new riggin's  
Ain't he tryin' to shine?  
Got a standin' collar  
An' a stove-pipe hat,  
I 'll jes' bet a dollar  
Some one gin him dat.

Don't one o' you mention,  
Nothin' 'bout his cloes,  
Don't pay no attention,  
Er let on you knows  
Dat he 's got 'em on him,  
Why, 't 'll mek him sick,  
Jes go on an' sco'n him,  
My, ain't dis a trick!

Look hyeah, whut 's he doin'  
Lookin' t' othah way?  
Dat ere move 's a new one,  
Some one call him, " Say! "  
Can't you see no pusson —  
Puttin' on you' airs,  
Sakes alive, you 's wuss'n  
Dese hyeah millionaires.

Need n't git so flighty,  
Case you got dat suit.  
Dem cloes ain't so mighty,—

### PARTED

DE breeze is blowin' 'cross de bay.  
My lady, my lady;  
De ship hit teks me far away,  
My lady, my lady;  
Ole Mas' done sol' me down de  
stream;  
Dey tell me 't ain't so bad 's hit  
seem,  
My lady, my lady.

O' co'se I knows dat you 'll be  
true,  
My lady, my lady;  
But den I do' know whut to do,  
My lady, my lady;  
I knowed some day we'd have to  
pa't,  
But den hit put' nigh breaks my  
hea't,  
My lady, my lady.

De day is long, de night is black,  
My lady, my lady;  
I know you 'll wait twell I come  
back,  
My lady, my lady;  
I 'll stan' de ship, I 'll stan' de  
chain,

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

But I'll come back, my darlin'  
Jane,  
My lady, my lady.

Jes' wait, jes' b'lieve in whut I  
say,

My lady, my lady;

D' ain't nothin' dat kin keep me  
'way,

My lady, my lady;

A man's a man, an' love is love;  
God knows ouah hea'ts, my little  
dove;

He'll he'p us f'om his th'one  
above,

My lady, my lady.

### TEMPTATION

I DONE got 'uligion, honey, an' I's  
happy ez a king;

Evahthing I see erbout me's jes'  
lak sunshine in de spring;

An' it seems lak I do' want to do  
anothah blessid thing

But jes' run an' tell de neighbours,  
an' to shout an' pray an'  
sing.

I done shuk my fis' at Satan, an'  
I's gin de worl' my back;

I do' want no hendrin' causes now  
a-both'rin' in my track;

Fu' I's on my way to glory, an' I  
feels too sho' to miss.

W'y, dey ain't no use in sinnin'  
when 'uligion's sweet ez dis.

Talk erbout a man backslidin' w'en  
he's on de gospel way;

No, suh, I done beat de debbil, an'  
Temptation's los' de day.

Gwine to keep my eyes right  
straight up, gwine to shet my  
eahs, an' see

Whut ole projick Mistah Satan's  
gwine to try to wuk on me.

Listen, whut dat soun' I hyeah  
dah? 'tain't no one commence  
to sing;

It's a fiddle; git erway dah! don'  
you hyeah dat blessid  
thing?

W'y, dat 's sweet ez drippin' honey,  
'cause, you knows, I draws de  
bow,

An' when music's sho' 'nough  
music, I's de one dat's sho'  
to know.

W'y, I's done de double shuffle;  
twell a body could n't res',

Jes' a-hyehin' Sam de fiddlah play  
dat chune his level bes';

I could cut a mighty caper, I could  
gin a mighty fling

Jes' right now, I's mo' dan suttain  
I could cut de pigeon wing.

Look hyeah, whut's dis I's been  
sayin'? whut on urf's tuk  
holt o' me?

Dat ole music come nigh runnin'  
my 'uligion up a tree!

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Cleah out wif dat dah ole fiddle,  
don' you try dat trick agin;  
Did n't think I could be tempted,  
but you lak to made me sin!

### POSSUM TROT

I 'VE journeyed 'roun' consid'able,  
a-seein' men an' things,  
An' I've learned a little of the  
sense that meetin' people  
brings;  
But in spite of all my travellin',  
an' of all I think I know,  
I've got one notion in my head,  
that I can't git to go;  
An' it is that the folks I meet in  
any other spot  
Ain't half so good as them I  
knowed back home in Possum  
Trot.

I know you've never heerd the  
name, it ain't a famous  
place,  
An' I reckon ef you'd search the  
map you could n't find a trace  
Of any sich locality as this I've  
named to you;  
But never mind, I know the place,  
an' I love it dearly too.  
It don't make no pretensions to  
bein' great or fine,  
The circuses don't come that way,  
they ain't no railroad line.  
It ain't no great big city, where  
the schemers plan an' plot,

But jest a little settlement, this  
place called Possum Trot.

But don't you think the folks that  
lived in that outlandish place  
Were ignorant of all the things  
that go for sense or grace.

Why, there was Hannah Dyer, you  
may search this teemin' earth  
An' never find a sweeter girl, er  
one o' greater worth;

An' Uncle Abner Williams, a-  
leanin' on his staff,

It seems like I kin hear him talk,  
an' hear his hearty laugh.

His heart was big an' cheery as a  
sunny acre lot,

Why, that's the kind o' folks we  
had down there at Possum  
Trot.

Good times? Well, now, to suit  
my taste,— an' I'm some hard  
to suit,—

There ain't been no sich pleasure  
sence, an' won't be none to  
boot,

With huskin' bees in Harvest time,  
an' dances later on,

An' singin' school, an' taffy pulls,  
an' fun from night till  
dawn.

Revivals come in winter time, bap-  
tizin's in the spring,

You'd ought to seen those people  
shout, an' heerd 'em pray an'  
sing;

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

You 'd ought to 've heard ole Par-  
son Brown a-throwin' gospel  
shot

Among the saints an' sinners in  
the days of Possum Trot.

We live up in the city now, my  
wife was bound to come;

I hear aroun' me day by day the  
endless stir an' hum.

I reckon that it done me good, an'  
yet it done me harm,

That oil was found so plentiful  
down there on my ole farm.

We've got a new-styled preacher,  
our church is new-styled too,

An' I've come down from what I  
knowed to rent a cushioned  
pew.

But often when I'm settin' there,  
it's foolish, like as not,

To think of them ol' benches in  
the church at Possum Trot.

I know that I'm ungrateful, an'  
sich thoughts must be a sin,

But I find myself a wishin' that  
the times was back agin.

With the huskin's an' the frolics,  
an' the joys I used to know,

When I lived at the settlement, a  
dozen years ago.

I don't feel this way often, I'm  
scarcely ever glum,

For life has taught me how to take  
her chances as they come.

But now an' then my mind goes  
back to that ol' buryin' plot,

That holds the dust of some I  
loved, down there at Possum  
Trot.

### DELY

JES' lak toddy wahms you thoo'

Sets yo' haid a reelin',

Meks you ovah good and new,

Dat's de way I's feelin'.

Seems to me hit's summah time,

Dough hit's wintah reely,

I's a feelin' jes' dat prime —

An' huh name is Dely.

Dis hyeah love's a cu'rus thing,

Changes 'roun' de season,

Meks you sad or meks you sing,

'Dout no urfly reason.

Sometimes I go mopin' 'roun',

Den agin I's leapin';

Sperits allus up an' down

Even when I's sleepin'.

Fu' de dreams comes to me den,

An' dey keeps me pitchin',

Lak de apple dumplin's w'en

Bilin' in de kitchen.

Some one sot to do me hahm,

Tryin' to ovahcome me,

Ketchin' Dely by de ahm

So's to tek huh f'om me.

Mon, you bettah b'lieve I fights  
(Dough hit's on'y seemin');  
I's a hittin' fu' my rights  
Even w'en I's dreamin'.



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

But I 'd let you have 'em all,  
Give 'em to you freely,  
Good an' bad ones, great an' small,  
So 's you leave me Dely.

Dely got dem meltin' eyes,  
Big an' black an' tendah.

Dely jes' a lady-size,  
Delikit an' slendah.

Dely brown ez brown kin be  
An' huh haih is curly;

Oh, she look so sweet to me,—  
Bless de precious girlie!

Dely brown ez brown kin be,  
She ain' no mullatter;  
She pure cullud,— don' you see  
Dat 's jes' whut 's de mattah?

Dat 's de why I love huh so,  
D' ain't no mix about huh,  
Soon 's you see huh face you know  
D' ain't no chanst to doubt huh.

Folks dey go to chu'ch an' pray  
So 's to git a blessin'.

Oomph, dey bettah come my way,  
Dey could lu'n a lesson.

Sabbaf day I don' go fu',  
Jes' to see my pigeon;

I jes' sets an' looks at huh,  
Dat 's enuff 'uligion.

### BREAKING THE CHARM

CAUGHT Susanner whistlin'; well,  
It 's most nigh too good to tell.  
'Twould 'a' b'en too good to see  
Ef it had n't b'en fur me,

Comin' up so soft an' sly  
That she didn' hear me nigh.  
I was pokin' 'round that day,  
An' ez I come down the way,  
First her whistle strikes my ears,—  
Then her gingham dress appears;  
So with soft step up I slips.  
Oh, them dewy, rosy lips!  
Ripe ez cherries, red an' round,  
Puckered up to make the sound.  
She was lookin' in the spring,  
Whistlin' to beat anything,—  
"Kitty Dale" er "In the Sweet."  
I was jest so mortal beat  
That I can't quite ricolock  
What the toon was, but I 'speck  
'T was some hymn er other, fur  
Hymny things is jest like her.  
Well she went on fur awhile  
With her face all in a smile,  
An' I never moved, but stood  
Still'er 'n a piece o' wood —  
Would n't wink ner would n't stir,  
But a-gazin' right at her,  
Tell she turns an' sees me — my!  
Thought at first she 'd try to fly.  
But she blushed an' stood her  
ground.  
Then, a-slyly lookin' round,  
She says: "Did you hear me,  
Ben?"  
"Whistlin' woman, crowin' hen,"  
Says I, lookin' awful stern.  
Then the red commenced to burn  
In them cheeks o' hern. Why, la!  
Reddest red you ever saw —  
Pineys wa'n't a circumstance.



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

You 'd 'a' noticed in a glance  
She was pow'rful shamed an'  
skeart;  
But she looked so sweet an' peart,  
That a idee struck my head;  
So I up an' slowly said:  
"Woman whistlin' brings shore  
harm,  
Jest one thing 'll break the charm."  
"And what's that?" "Oh,  
my!" says I,  
"I don't like to tell you."  
"Why?"  
Says Susanner. "Well, you see  
It would kinder fall on me."  
Course I knowed that she'd in-  
sist,—  
So I says: "You must be kissed  
By the man that heard you whistle;  
Everybody says that this 'll  
Break the charm and set you free  
From the threat'nin' penalty."  
She was blushin' fit to kill,  
But she answered, kinder still:  
"I don't want to have no harm,  
Please come, Ben, an' break the  
charm."  
Did I break that charm?—oh,  
well,  
There's some things I must n't  
tell.  
I remember, afterwhile,  
Her a-sayin' with a smile:  
"Oh, you quit,—you sassy dunce,  
You jest caught me whistlin' *once*."  
Ev'ry sence that when I hear  
Some one whistlin' kinder clear,

I most break my neck to see  
Ef it's Susy; but, dear me,  
I jest find I've b'en to chase  
Some blamed boy about the place.  
Dad's b'en noticin' my way,  
An' last night I heerd him say:  
"We must send fur Dr. Glenn,  
Mother; somethin's wrong with  
Ben!"

### HUNTING SONG

TEK a cool night, good an'  
cleah,  
Skiff o' snow upon de groun';  
Jes' 'bout fall-time o' de yeah  
W'en de leaves is dry an'  
brown;  
Tek a dog an' tek a axe,  
Tek a lantu'n in yo' han',  
Step light whah de switches  
cracks,  
Fu' dey's huntin' in de lan'.  
Down thoo de valleys an' ovah de  
hills,  
Into de woods whah de 'simmon-  
tree grows,  
Wakin' an' skeerin' de po' whip-  
po'wills,  
Huntin' fu' coon an' fu' 'possum  
we goes.  
Blow dat ho'n dah loud an'  
strong,  
Call de dogs an' da'kies neah;  
Mek its music cleah an' long,  
So de folks at home kin hyeah.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Blow it twell de hills an' trees  
Sen's de echoes tumblin' back;  
Blow it twell de back'ard breeze  
Tells de folks we's on de  
track.

Coons is a-ramblin' an' 'possums  
is out;

Look at dat dog; you could set  
on his tail!

Watch him now — steady,— min'  
— what you's about,

Bless me, dat animal's got on  
de trail!

Listen to him ba'kin now!

Dat means bus'ness, sho's you  
bo'n;

Ef he's struck de scent I 'low  
Dat ere 'possum's sholy gone.

Knowed dat dog fu' fo'teen  
yeahs,

An' I nevah seed him fail

W'en he sot dem flappin' eahs

An' went off upon a trail.

Run, Mistah 'Possum, an' run,  
Mistah Coon,

No place is safe fu' yo' ramblin'  
to-night;

Mas' gin' de lantu'n an' God gin  
de moon,

An' a long hunt gins a good ap-  
petite.

Look hyeah, folks, you hyeah  
dat change?

Dat ba'k is sha'per dan de res'.

Dat ere soun' ain't nothin'  
strange,—

Dat dog's talked his level  
bes'.

Somep'n' 's treed, I know de  
soun'.

Dah now,— wha'd I tell  
you? see!

Dat ere dog done run him  
down;

Come hyeah, he'p cut down  
dis tree.

Ah, Mistah 'Possum, we got you  
at las'—

Need n't play daid, laying dah  
on de groun';<sup>2</sup>

Fros' an' de 'simmons has made  
you grow fas',—

Won't he be fine when he's  
roasted up brown!

### A LETTER

DEAR MISS LUCY: I been t'inkin'  
dat I 'd write you long fo' dis,  
But dis writin' 's mighty tejous, an'  
you know jes' how it is.

But I 's got a little lesure, so I teks  
my pen in han'

Fu' to let you know my feelin's  
since I retched dis furrin' lan'.

I 's right well, I 's glad to tell you  
(dough dis climate ain't to  
blame),

An' I hopes w'en dese lines reach  
you, dat dey 'll fin' yo' se'f de  
same.

Cose I 'se feelin kin' o' homesick  
— dat 's ez nachul ez kin be,

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

W'en a feller's mo'n th'ee thousand miles across dat awful sea.

(Don't you let nobidy fool you 'bout de ocean bein' gran';

If you want to see de billers, you jes' view dem f'om de lan'.)

'Bout de people? We been t'inkin' dat all white folks was alak;

But dese Englishmen is diffunt, an' dey's curus fu' a fac'.

Fust, dey's heavier an' redder in dey make-up an' dey looks,

An' dey don't put salt nor pepper in a blessed t'ing dey cooks!

W'en dey gin you good ol' tu'nips, ca'ots, pa'snips, beets, an' sich,

Ef dey ain't some one to tell you, you cain't 'stinguish which is which.

W'en I t'ought I's eatin' chicken — you may b'lieve dis hyeah's a lie —

But de waiter beat me down dat I was eatin' rabbit pie.

An' dey 'd t'ink dat you was crazy — jes' a reg'lar ravin' loon,

Ef you 'd speak erbout a 'possum or a piece o' good ol' coon.

O, hit's mighty nice, dis trav'lin', an' I's kin' o' glad I come.

But, I reckon, now I's willin' fu' to tek my way back home.

I done see de Crystal Palace, an' I's hyeahd dey string-band play,

But I has n't seen no banjos lay'in' nowhahs roun' dis way.

Jes' gin ol' Jim Bowles a banjo, an' he'd not go very fu',

'Fo' he'd outplayed all dese fiddlers, wif dey flourish and dey stir.

Evahbiddy dat I's met wif has been monst'ous kin an' good;

But I t'ink I'd lak it better to be down in Jones's wood,

Where we ust to have sich frolics, Lucy, you an' me an' Nelse,

Dough my appetite 'ud call me, ef dey was n't nuffin else.

I'd jes' lak to have some sweet-pertaters roasted in de skin;

I's a-longin' fu' my chittlin's an' my mustard greens ergin;

I's a-wishin' fu' some buttermilk, an' co'n braid, good an' brown,

An' a drap o' good ol' bourbon fu' to wash my feelin's down!

An' I's comin' back to see you jes' as ehly as I kin,

So you better not go spa'kin' wif dat wuffless scoun'el Quin!

Well, I reckon, I mus' close now; write ez soon's dis reaches you;

Gi' my love to 'Sister Mandy an' to Uncle Isham, too.

Tell de folks I sen' 'em howdy; gin a kiss to pap an' mam;

Closin' I is, deah Miss Lucy,  
Still Yo' Own True-Lovin' SAM.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

P. S. Ef you cain't mek out dis  
letter, lay it by erpon de she'f,  
An' when I git home, I 'll read  
it, darlin', to you my own se'f.

### CHRISMUS IS A-COMIN'

BONES a-gittin' achy,  
Back a-feelin' col',  
Han's a-growin' shaky,  
Jes' lak I was ol'.  
Fros' erpon de meddah  
Lookin' mighty white;  
Snowdraps lak a feddah  
Slippin' down at night.  
Jes' keep t'ings a-hummin'  
Spite o' fros' an' showahs,  
Chrismus is a-comin'  
An' all de week is ouahs.

Little mas' a-axin',  
"Who is Santy Claus?"  
Meks it kin' o' taxin'  
Not to brek de laws.  
Chillun's pow'ful tryin'  
To a pusson's grace  
W'en dey go a pryin'  
Right on th'oo you' face  
Down ermong yo' feelin's;  
Jes' 'pears lak dat you  
Got to change you' dealin's  
So's to tell 'em true.

An' my pickaninny —  
Dreamin' in his sleep!  
Come hyeah, Mammy Jinny,  
Come an' tek a peep.

Ol' Mas' Bob an' Missis  
In dey house up daih  
Got no chile lak dis is,  
D' ain't none anywhaih.  
Sleep, my little lammy,  
Sleep, you little limb,  
He do' know whut mammy  
Done saved up fu' him.

Dey 'll be banjo pickin',  
Dancin' all night thoo.  
Dey 'll be lots o' chicken,  
Plenty tukky, too.  
Drams to wet yo' whistles  
So's to drive out chills.  
Whut I keer fu' drizzles  
Fallin' on de hills?  
Jes' keep t'ings a-hummin'  
Spite o' col' an' showahs,  
Chrismus day's a-comin',  
An' all de week is ouahs

### A CABIN TALE

THE YOUNG MASTER ASKS FOR A  
STORY

WHUT you say, dah? huh, uh!  
chile,  
You's enough to dribe me wile.  
Want a sto'y; jes' hyeah dat!  
Whah' 'll I git a sto'y at?  
Di'n' I tell you th'ee las' night?  
Go 'way, honey, you ain't right.  
I got somep'n' else to do,  
'Cides jes' tellin' tales to you.  
Tell you jes' one? Lem me see  
Whut dat one's a-gwine to be.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

When you 's ole, yo membry fails;  
Seems lak I do' know no tales.  
Well, set down dah in dat cheer,  
Keep still ef you wants to hyeah.  
Tek dat chin up off yo' han's,  
Set up nice now. Goodness lan's!  
Hol' yo'se'f up lak yo' pa.

Bet nobidy evah saw  
Him scrunched down lak you was  
den —  
High-tone boys meks high-tone  
men.

Once dey was a ole black bah,  
Used to live 'roun' hyeah some-  
whah

In a cave. He was so big  
He could ca'y off a pig  
Lak you picks a chicken up,  
Er yo' leetles' bit o' pup.  
An' he had two gread big eyes,  
Jes' erbout a saucer's size.  
Why, dey looked lak balls o' fiah  
Jumpin' 'roun' erpon a wiah  
W'en dat bah was mad; an' laws!  
But you ought to seen his paws!  
Did I see 'em? How you 'spec  
I's a-gwine to ricollec'  
Dis hyeah ya'n I's try'n' to spin  
Ef you keeps on puttin' in?  
You keep still an' don't you cheep  
Less I'll sen' you off to sleep.  
Dis hyeah bah'd go trompin'  
'roun'

Eatin' evahthing he foun';  
No one could n't have a fa'm  
But dat bah 'u'd do' em ha'm;

And dey could n't ketch de scamp.  
Anywhah he wan'ed to tramp.  
Dah de scoun'el 'd mek his track,  
Do his du't an' come on back.  
He was sich a sly ole limb,  
Traps was jes' lak fun to him.

Now, down neah whah Mistah  
Bah

Lived, dey was a weasel dah;  
But dey was n't fren's a-tall  
Case de weasel was so small.  
An' de bah 'u'd, jes' fu' sass,  
Tu'n his nose up w'en he'd pass.  
Weasels 's small o' cose, but my!  
Dem air animiles is sly.  
So dis hyeah one says, says he,  
"I'll jes' fix dat bah, you see."  
So he fixes up his plan  
An' hunts up de fa'merman.  
When de fa'mer see him come,  
He 'mence lookin' mighty glum,  
An' he ketches up a stick;  
But de weasel speak up quick:  
"Hol' on, Mistah Fa'mer man,  
I wan' 'splain a little plan.  
Ef you waits, I'll tell you whah  
An' jes' how to ketch ol' Bah.  
But I tell yow now you mus'  
Gin me one fat chicken fus'."  
Den de man he scratch his haid,  
Las' he say, "I'll mek de trade."  
So de weasel et his hen,  
Smacked his mouf and says,  
"Well, den,  
Set yo' trap an' bait ternight,  
An' I'll ketch de bah all right."

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Den he ups an' goes to see  
Mistah Bah, an' says, says he:  
"Well, fren' Bah, we *ain't* been  
fren's,

But ternight ha'd feelin' 'en's.  
Ef you ain't too proud to steal,  
We kin git a splendid meal.  
Cose I would n't come to you,  
But it mus' be done by two;  
Hit's a trap, but we kin beat  
All dey tricks an' git de meat."  
"Cose I's wif you," says de bah,  
"Come on, weasel, show me  
whah."

Well, dey trots erlong ontwell  
Dat air meat begannd to smell  
In de trap. Den weasel say:  
"Now you put yo' paw dis way  
While I hol' de spring back so,  
Den you grab de meat an' go."  
Well, de bah he had to grin  
Ez he put his big paw in,  
Den he juked up, but — kerbing!  
Weasel done let go de spring.  
"Dah now," says de weasel, "dah,  
I done cotched you, Mistah Bah!"  
O, dat bah did sno't and spout,  
Try'n' his bestes' to git out,  
But de weasel say, "Goo'-bye!  
Weasel small, but weasel sly."  
Den he tu'ned his back an' run  
Tol' de fa'mer whut he done.  
So de fa'mer come down dah,  
Wif a axe and killed de bah.

Dah now, ain't dat sto'y fine?  
Run erlong now, nevah min'.

Want some mo', you rascal, you?  
No, suh! no, suh! dat 'll do.

### AT CANDLE-LIGHTIN' TIME

WHEN I come in f'om de co'n-fiel'  
aftah wo'kin' ha'd all day,  
It's amazin' nice to fin' my sup-  
pah all erpon de way;  
An' it's nice to smell de coffee  
bubblin' ovah in de pot,  
An' it's fine to see de meat a-  
sizzlin' teasin'-lak an' hot.

But when suppah-time is ovah, an'  
de t'ings is cleahed away;  
Den de happy hours dat foller are  
de sweetes' of de day.  
When my co'ncob pipe is sta'ted,  
an' de smoke is drawin'  
prime,  
My ole 'ooman says, "I reckon,  
Ike, it's candle-lightin' time."

Den de chillun snuggle up to me,  
an' all commence to call,  
"Oh, say, daddy, now it's time  
to mek de shadders on de  
wall."  
So I puts my han's togethah —  
evah daddy knows de way, —  
An' de chillun snuggle closer roun'  
ez I begin to say: —

"Fus' thing, hyeah come Mistah  
Rabbit; don' you see him wo'k  
his eahs?



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Huh, uh! dis mus' be a donkey,—  
look, how innercent he 'pears!  
Dah 's de ole black swan a-swim-  
min'—ain't she got a' awful  
neck?  
Who 's dis feller dat 's a-comin'?  
Why, dat 's ole dog Tray, I  
'spec'!"

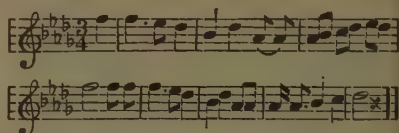
Dat 's de way I run on, tryin' fu'  
to please 'em all I can;  
Den I hollahs, "Now be keerful  
—dis hyeah las' 's de buga-  
man!"  
An' dey runs an' hides dey faces;  
dey ain't skeered — dey 's let-  
tin' on:  
But de play ain't raaly ovah twell  
dat buga-man is gone.

So I jes' teks up my banjo, an' I  
plays a little chune,  
An' you see dem haid come peepin'  
out to listen mighty soon.  
Den my wife says, "Sich a pappy  
fu' to give you sich a fright!  
Jes, you go to baid, an' leave him:  
say yo' prayers an' say good-  
night."

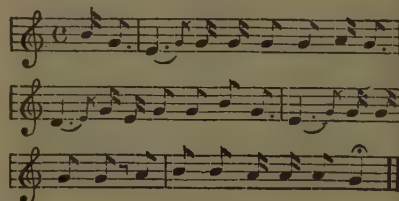
### WHISTLING SAM

I HAS hyeahd o' people dancin' an'  
I 's hyeahd o' people singin'.  
An' I 's been 'roun' lots of othahs  
dat could keep de banjo  
ringin';

But of all de whistlin' da'kies dat  
have lived an' died since Ham,  
De whistlin'est I evah seed was  
ol' Ike Bates's Sam.  
In de kitchen er de stable, in de  
fiel' er mowin' hay,  
You could hyeah dat boy a-whis-  
tlin' pu'ty nigh a mile er-  
way,—  
Puck'rin' up his ugly features  
'twell you could n't see his  
eyes,  
Den you'd hyeah a soun' lak dis  
un f'om dat awful puckah  
rise:



When dey had revival meetin' an'  
de Lawd's good grace was  
flowin'  
On de groun' dat needed wat'rin'  
whaih de seeds of good was  
growin',  
While de othahs was a-singin' an'  
a-shoutin' right an' lef',  
You could hyeah dat boy a-whis-  
tlin' kin' o' sof' beneaf his  
bref:





# PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

At de call fu' colo'ed soldiers,  
Sam enlisted 'mong de res'  
Wid de blue o' Gawd's great ahmy  
wropped about his swellin'  
breas',

An' he laffed an' whistled loudah  
in his youfful joy an' glee

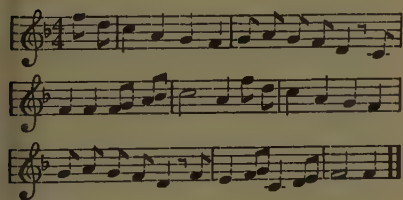
Dat de govament would let him  
he'p to mek his people free.

Daih was lots o' ties to bin' him,  
pappy, mammy, an' his  
Dinah,—

Dinah, min' you, was his sweet-  
hea't, an' dey was n't nary  
finah;

But he lef' 'em all, I tell you, lak  
a king he ma'ched away,

Try'n' his level bes' to whistle,  
happy, solemn, choky, gay:



To de front he went an' bravely  
fought de foe an' kep' his  
sperrit,

An' his comerds said his whistle  
made 'em strong when dey  
could hyeah it.

When a saber er a bullet cut some  
frien' o' his'n down,

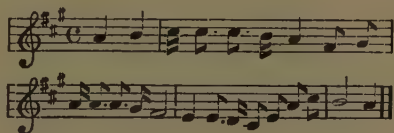
An' de time 'u'd come to trench  
him an' de boys 'u'd gettah  
'roun',

An' dey could n't sta't a hymn-  
tune, mebbe none o' dem  
'u'd keer,

Sam 'u'd whistle "Sleep in Jesus,"  
an' he knowed de Mastah 'd  
hyeah.

In de camp, all sad discouraged,  
he would cheer de hea'ts of  
all,

When above de soun' of labour  
dey could hyeah his whistle  
call:



When de cruel wah was ovah an'  
de boys come ma'chin' back,

Dey was shouts an' cries an'  
blessin's all erlong dey happy  
track,

An' de da'kies all was happy; souls  
an' bodies bofe was freed.

Why, hit seemed lak de Redeemah  
mus' 'a' been on earf indeed.

Dey was gethahed all one evenin'  
jes' befo' de cabin do',

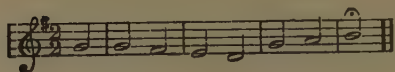
When dey hyeahd somebody  
whistlin' kin' o' sof' an' sweet  
an' low.

Dey could n't see de whistlah, but  
de hymn was cleah and  
ca'm,

An' dey all stood daih a-listenin'  
ontwell Dinah shouted,  
"Sam!"

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

An' dey seed a little da'ky way off  
yandah thoo de trees  
Wid his face all in a puckah mekin'  
jes' sich soun's ez dese:



### HOW LUCY BACKSLID

DE times is mighty stirrin' 'mong  
de people up ouah way,  
Dey 'sputin' an' dey argyin' an'  
fussin' night an' day;  
An' all dis monst'ous trouble dat  
hit meks me tiahed to tell  
Is 'bout dat Lucy Jackson dat was  
sich a mighty belle.

She was de preachah's favoured,  
an' he tol' de chu'ch one  
night  
Dat she travelled thoo de cloud o'  
sin a-bearin' of a light;  
But, now, I 'low he t'inkin' dat she  
mus' 'a' los' huh lamp,  
Case Lucy done backslided an' dey  
trouble in de camp.

Huh daddy wants to beat huh, but  
huh mammy daihs him to,  
Fu' she lookin' at de question f'om  
a ooman's pint o' view;  
An' she say dat now she would n't  
have it diff'ent ef she could;  
Dat huh darter only acted jes' lak  
any othah would.

Cose you know w'en women argy,  
dey is mighty easy led  
By dey hea'ts an' don't go foolin'  
'bout de reasons of de haid.  
So huh mammy laid de law down  
(she ain' reckernizin' wrong),  
But you got to mek erlowance fu'  
de cause dat go along.

Now de cause dat made Miss Lucy  
fu' to th'ow huh grace away  
I's afeard won't baih no 'spection  
w'en hit come to jedgement  
day;  
Do' de same t'ing been a-wo'kin'  
evah sence de worl' began,—  
De ooman disobeyin' fu' to 'tice  
along a man.

Ef you 'tended de revivals which  
we held de wintah pas',  
You kin rickolec' dat convuts was  
a-comin' thick an' fas';  
But dey ain't no use in talkin', dey  
was all lef' in de lu'ch  
W'en ol' Mis' Jackson's dartah  
foun' huh peace an' tuk de  
chu'ch.

W'y, she shouted ovah evah inch  
of Ebenezah's flo';  
Up into de preachah's pulpit an'  
f'om dah down to de do';  
Den she hugged an' squeezed huh  
mammy, an' she hugged an'  
kissed huh dad,  
An' she struck out at huh sistah,  
people said, lak she was mad.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

I has 'tended some revivals dat  
was lively in my day,  
An' I's seed folks git 'uligion in  
mos' evah kin' o' way;  
But I tell you, an' you b'lieve me  
dat I's speakin' true indeed,  
Dat gal tuk huh 'ligion ha'dah dan  
de ha'dest yit I's seed.

Well, f'om dat, 't was "Sistah  
Jackson, won't you please do  
dis er dat?"

She mus' allus sta't de singin'  
w'en dey'd pass erroun' de  
hat,

An' hit seemed dey was n't nuffin'  
in dat chu'ch dat could go by  
'Dout sistah Lucy Jackson had a  
finger in de pie.

But de sayin' mighty trufeful dat  
hit easiah to sail

W'en de sea is ca'm an' gentle dan  
to weathah out a gale.

Dat's whut made dis ooman's  
trouble; ef de sto'm had kep'  
away,

She'd 'a' had enough 'uligion fu'  
to lasted out huh day.

Lucy went wid 'Lishy Davis, but  
w'en she jined chu'ch, you  
know

Dah was lots o' little places dat, of  
cose, she could n't go;

An' she had to gin up dancin' an'  
huh singin' an' huh play.—

Now hit's nachul dat sich goin's  
on 'u'd drive a man away.

So, w'en Lucy got so solemn, Ike  
he sta'ted fu' to go

Wid a gal who was a sinnah an'  
could mek a bettah show.

Lucy jes' went on to meetin' lak  
she did n't keer a rap,

But my 'sperunce kep' me t'inkin'  
dah was somep'n' gwine to  
drap.

Fu' a gal won't let 'uligion er no  
othah so't o' t'ing

Stop huh w'en she teks a notion  
dat she wants a weddin' ring.

You kin p'omise huh de blessin's  
of a happy aftah life

(An' hit's nice to be a angel), but  
she'd ravah be a wife.

So w'en Chrismus come an' mas-  
tah gin a frolic on de lawn,

Did n't 'sprise me not de littlest  
seein' Lucy lookin' on.

An' I seed a wa'nin' lightnin' go  
a-flashin' f'om huh eye

Jest ez 'Lishy an' his new gal went  
a-gallivantin' by.

An' dat Tildy, umph! she giggled,  
an' she gin huh dress a flirt

Lak de people she was passin' was  
ez common ez de dirt;

An' de minit she was dancin', w'y  
dat gal put on mo' aih

Dan a cat a-tek'n' kittens up a  
paih o' windin' staih.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

She could 'fo'd to show huh  
sma'tness, fu' she could n't  
he'p but know

Dat wid jes' de present dancahs  
she was ownah of de flo';

But I t'ink she'd kin' o' cooled  
down ef she happened on de  
sly

Fu' to noticed dat 'ere lightnin'  
dat I seed in Lucy's eye.

An' she would n't been so 'ston-  
ished w'en de people gin a  
shout,

An' Lucy th'owed huh mantle  
back an' come a-glidin' out.

Some ahms was dah to tek huh an'  
she flattahed down de flo'

Lak a feddah f'om a bedtick w'en  
de win' commence to blow.

Soon ez Tildy see de trouble, she  
jes' tu'n an' toss huh haid,

But seem lak she los' huh sperrit,  
all huh darin'ness was daid.

Did n't cut anothah capah nary  
time de blessid night;

But de othah one, hit looked lak  
could n't git enough delight.

W'en you keeps a colt a-stan'nin'  
in de stable all along,

W'en he do git out hit's nachul  
he'll be pullin' mighty strong,

Ef you will tie up yo' feelin's,  
hyeah's de bes' advice to tek,

Look out fu' an awful loosin' w'en  
de string dat hol's 'em brek.

Lucy's mammy groaned to see huh,  
an' huh pappy sto'med an' to',  
But she kep' right on a-hol'in' to  
de centah of de flo'.

So dey went an' ast de pastoh ef he  
could n't mek huh quit,

But de tellin' of de sto'y th'owed  
de preachah in a fit.

Tildy Taylor chewed huh hank'-  
cher twell she'd chewed it in  
a hole,—

All de sinnahs was rejoicin' 'cause  
a lamb had lef' de fol',

An' de las' I seed o' Lucy, she an'  
'Lish was side an' side:

I don't blame de gal fu' dancin',  
an' I could n't ef I tried.

Fu' de men dat wants to ma'y  
ain't a-growin' 'roun' on  
trees,

An' de gal dat wants to git one  
sholy has to try to please.

Hit's a ha'd t'ing fu' a ooman fu'  
to pray an' jes' set down,

An' to sacafice a husban' so's to  
try to gain a crown.

Now, I don' say she was justified  
in follerin' huh plan;

But aldough she los' huh 'ligion,  
yit she sholy got de man.

Latah on, w'en she is suttain dat  
de preachah's made 'em fas'

She kin jes' go back to chu'ch an'  
ax fu'giveness fu' de pas'!

**LYRICS OF LOVE AND LAUGHTER**



## TWO LITTLE BOOTS

Two little boots all rough an' wo',  
Two little boots!

Law, I's kissed 'em times befo',  
Dese little boots!

Seems de toes a-peepin' thoo  
Dis hyeah hole an' sayin' "Boo!"  
Evah time dey looks at you —  
Dese little boots.

Membah de time he put 'em on,  
Dese little boots;

Riz an' called fu' 'em by dawn,  
Dese little boots;

Den he tromped de livelong day,  
Laffin' in his happy way,  
Evaht'ing he had to say,  
"My little boots!"

Kickin' de san' de whole day long,  
Dem little boots;

Good de cobblah made 'em strong,  
Dem little boots!

Rocks was fu' dat baby's use,

I'on had to stan' abuse

W'en you tu'ned dese champeens  
loose,

Dese little boots!

Ust to make de ol' cat cry,  
Dese little boots;

Den you walked it mighty high,  
Proud little boots!

Ahms akimbo, stan'in' wide,

Eyes a-sayin' "Dis is pride!"  
Den de manny-baby stridel!  
You little boots.

Somehow, you don' seem so gay,  
Po' little boots,  
Sence yo' ownah went erway,  
Po' little boots!  
Yo' bright tops don' look so red,  
Dese brass tips is dull an' dead;  
"Goo'-by," whut de baby said;  
Deah little boots!

Ain't you kin' o' sad yo'se'f,  
You little boots?

Dis is all his mammy's lef',  
Two little boots.

Sence huh baby gone an' died.  
Heav'n itse'f hit seem to hide  
Des a little bit inside  
Two little boots.

## TO THE ROAD

COOL is the wind, for the summer  
is waning,

Who's for the road?

Sun-flecked and soft, where the  
dead leaves are raining,

Who's for the road?

Knapsack and alpenstock press  
hand and shoulder,

Prick of the brier and roll of the  
boulder;



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

This be your lot till the season  
grow older;  
Who's for the road?

Up and away in the hush of the  
morning,

Who's for the road?

Vagabond he, all conventions a-  
scorning,

Who's for the road?

Music of warblers so merrily sing-  
ing,

Draughts from the rill from the  
roadside up-springing,

Nectar of grapes from the vines  
lowly swinging,

These on the road.

Now every house is a hut or a  
hovel,

Come to the road:

Mankind and moles in the dark  
love to grovel,

But to the road.

Throw off the loads that are bend-  
ing you double;

Love is for life, only labor is  
trouble;

Truce to the town, whose best gift  
is a bubble:

Come to the road!

### A SPRING WOOING

COME on walkin' wid me, Lucy;  
'tain't no time to mope  
erroun'

W'en de sunshine's shoutin  
glory in de sky,

An' de little Johnny-Jump-Ups's  
jes' a-springin' f'om de  
groun',

Den a-lookin' roun' to ax each  
othah w'y.

Don' you hyeah dem cows a-  
mooiin'? Dat's dey howdy  
to de spring;

Ain' dey lookin' most oncom-  
mon satisfied?

Hit's enough to mek a body want  
to spread dey mouf an'  
sing

Jes' to see de critters all so  
spa'klin'-eyed.

W'y dat squir'l dat jes' run past  
us, ef I did n' know his  
tricks,

I could swaih he'd got 'uligion  
jes' to-day;

An' dem liza'ds slippin' back an'  
fofe ermong de stones an'  
sticks

Is a-wigglin' 'cause dey feel so  
awful gay.

Oh, I see yo' eyes a-shinin' dough  
you try to mek me b'lieve

Dat you ain' so monst'ous happy  
'cause you come;

But I tell you dis hyeah weathah  
meks it moughty ha'd to  
'ceive

Ef a body's soul ain' blin' an'  
deef an' dumb.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Robin whistlin' ovah yandah ez he  
buil' his little nes';

Whut you reckon dat he sayin'  
to his mate?

He's a-sayin' dat he love huh in de  
wo'ds she know de bes',

An' she lookin' mighty pleased  
at whut he state.

Now, Miss Lucy, dat ah robin  
sholy got his sheer o' sense,

An' de hen-bird got huh  
mothah-wit fu' true;

So I t'ink ef you 'll excuse me, fu'  
I do' mean no erfence,

Dey's a lesson in dem birds fu'  
me an' you.

I's a-buil'in' o' my cabin, an' I's  
vines erbove de do'

Fu' to kin' o' gin it sheltah f'om  
de sun;

Gwine to have a little kitchen wid  
a reg'lar wooden flo',

An' dey 'll be a back verandy  
w'en hit's done.

I's a-waitin' fu' you, Lucy, tek de  
'zample o' de birds,

Dat's a-lovin' an' a-matin' evah-  
whaih.

I cain' tell you dat I loves you in  
de robin's music wo'ds,

But my cabin's talkin' fu' me  
ovah thaih!

### JOGGIN' ERLONG

DE da'kest hour, dey allus say,  
is des' befo' de dawn,

But it's moughty ha'd a-waitin'  
W'ere de night goes frownin'  
on;

An' it's moughty ha'd a-hopin'  
W'en de clouds is big an' black,  
An' all de t'ings you's waited fu'  
Has failed, er gone to wrack —

But des' keep on a-joggin' wid a  
little bit o' song,

De mo'n is allus brightah w'en de  
night's been long.

Dey's lots o' knocks you's got to  
tek

Befo' yo' journey's done,  
An' dey's times w'en you 'll be  
wishin'

Dat de weary race was run;  
W'en you want to give up tryin'  
An' des' float erpon de wave,

W'en you don't feel no mo' sorrer  
Ez you t'ink erbout de grave —

Den, des' keep on a-joggin' wid a  
little bit o' song,

De mo'n is allus brightah w'en de  
night's been long.

De whup-lash sting a good deal  
mo'

De back hit's knowed befo',  
An' de burden's allus heavies'  
Whaih hits weight has made a  
so';

Dey is times w'en tribulation  
Seems to git de uppah han'  
An' to whip de weary trav'lah  
'Twell he ain't got stren'th to  
stan'—

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

But des' keep on a-joggin' wid a  
little bit o' song,  
De mo'n is allus brightah w'en de  
night's been long.

### IN MAY

OH to have you in May,  
To talk with you under the  
trees,  
Dreaming throughout the day,  
Drinking the wine-like breeze,

Oh it were sweet to think  
That May should be ours again,  
Hoping it not, I shrink,  
Out of the sight of men.

May brings the flowers to bloom,  
It brings the green leaves to the  
tree,  
And the fatally sweet perfume,  
Of what you once were to me.

### DREAMS

WHAT dreams we have and how  
they fly  
Like rosy clouds across the sky;  
Of wealth, of fame, of sure suc-  
cess,  
Of love that comes to cheer  
and bless;  
And how they wither, how they  
fade,  
The waning wealth, the jilting  
jade —

The fame that for a moment  
gleams,  
Then flies forever,— dreams, ah!  
— dreams!

O burning doubt and long regret,  
O tears with which our eyes are  
wet,  
Heart-throbs, heart-aches, the  
glut of pain,  
The somber cloud, the bitter  
rain,  
You were not of those dreams —  
ah! well,  
Your full fruition who can tell?  
Wealth, fame, and love, ah!  
love that beams  
Upon our souls, all dreams —  
ah! dreams.

### THE TRYST

DE night creep down erlong de  
lan',  
De shadders rise an' shake,  
De frog is sta'tin' up his ban',  
De cricket is awake;  
My wo'k is mos' nigh done, Celes',  
To-night I won't be late,  
I's hu'yin' thoo my level bes',  
Wait fu' me by de gate.  
De mockin'-bird 'll sen' his glee  
A-thrillin' thoo and thoo,  
I know dat ol' magnolia-tree  
Is smellin' des' fu' you;  
De jessamine erside de road  
Is bloomin' rich an' white,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

My hea't's a-th'obbin' 'cause it  
knowed

You 'd wait fu' me to-night.

Hit's lonesome, ain't it, stan'in'  
thaih

Wid no one nigh to talk?

But ain't dey whispahs in de aih

Erlong de gyahden walk?

Don't somep'n kin' o' call my  
name,

An' say "he love you bes'?"

Hit's true, I wants to say de  
same,

So wait fu' me, Celes'.

Sing somep'n fu' to pass de time,  
Outsing de mockin'-bird,

You got de music an' de rhyme,

You beat him wid de word.

I's comin' now, my wo'k is done,

De hour has come fu' res',

I wants to fly, but only run —

Wait fu' me, deah Celes'.

### A PLEA

TREAT me nice, Miss Mandy  
Jane,

Treat me nice.

Dough my love has tu'ned my  
brain,

Treat me nice.

I ain't done a t'ing to shame,

Lovahs all ac's jes' de same:

Don't you know we ain't to blame?

Treat me nice!

Cose I know I's talkin' wild;

Treat me nice;

I cain't talk no bettah, child,

Treat me nice;

Whut a pusson gwine to do,

W'en he come a-cou'tin' you

All a-trimblin' thoo and thoo?

Please be nice.

Reckon I mus' go de paf

Othahs do:

Lovahs lingah, ladies laff;

Mebbe you

Do' mean all the things you say,

An' pu'haps some latah day

W'en I baig you ha'd, you may

Treat me nice!

### THE DOVE

OUT of the sunshine and out of  
the heat,

Out of the dust of the grimy  
street,

A song fluttered down in the form  
of a dove,

And it bore me a message, the one  
word — Love!

Ah, I was toiling, and oh, I was  
sad:

I had forgotten the way to be glad.

Now, smiles for my sadness and  
for my toil, rest

Since the dove fluttered down to  
its home in my breast!

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

## A WARM DAY IN WINTER

"SUNSHINE on de medders,  
Greenness on de way;  
Dat's de blessed reason  
I sing all de day."  
Look hyeah! Whut you axin'?  
Whut meks me so merry?  
'Spect to see me sighin'  
W'en hit's wa'm in Febawary?

'Long de stake an' rider  
Seen a robin set;  
W'y, hit 'mence a-thawin',  
Groun' is monst'ous wet.  
Den you stan' dah wond'rin',  
Lookin' skeert an' stary;  
I's a right to caper  
W'en hit's wa'm in Febawary.

Missis gone a-drivin',  
Mastah gone to shoot;  
Ev'ry da'ky lazin'  
In de sun to boot.  
Qua'tah's moughty pleasant,  
Hangin' 'roun' my Mary;  
Cou'tin' boun' to prospah  
W'en hit's wa'm in Febawary.

Cidah look so pu'ty  
Po'in' f'om de jug —  
Don' you see it's happy?  
Hyeah it laffin'—glug?  
Now's de time fu' people  
Fu' to try an' bury  
All dey grief an' sorrer,  
W'en hit's wa'm in Febawary.

## SNOWIN'

DEY is snow upon de meddahs,  
dey is snow upon de hill,  
An' de little branch's watahs is  
all glistenin' an' still;  
De win' goes roun' de cabin lak a  
sperrit wan'erin' 'roun'.  
An' de chillen shakes an' shivahs  
as dey listen to de soun'.  
Dey is hick'ry in de fiahplace,  
whah de blaze is risin' high,  
But de heat it meks ain't wa'min'  
up de gray clouds in de sky.  
Now an' den I des peep outside,  
den I hurries to de do',  
Lawd a mussy on my body, how I  
wish it would n't snow!

I kin stan' de hottes' summah, I  
kin stan' de wettes' fall,  
I kin stan' de chilly springtime in  
de ploughland, but dat's  
all;  
Fu' de ve'y hottes' fiah nevah tells  
my skin a t'ing,  
W'en de snow commence a-flyin',  
an' de win' begin to sing.  
Dey is plenty wood erroun' us, an'  
I chop an' tote it in,  
But de t'oughts dat I's a t'inkin'  
while I's wo'kin' is a sin.  
I kin keep f'om downright swahin'  
all de time I's on de go,  
But my hea't is full o' cuss-wo'ds  
w'en I's trampin' thoo de  
snow.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

What you say, you Lishy Davis,  
dat you see a possum's tracks?

Look hyeah, boy, you stop yo'  
foolin', bring ol' Spot, an'  
bring de ax.

Is I col'? Go way, now, Mandy,  
what you t'ink I's made of?  
— sho,

W'y dis win' is des ez gentle, an'  
dis ain't no kin' o' snow.

Dis hyeah weathah 's des ez healthy  
ez de wa'mest summah days.

All you chillen step up lively, pile  
on wood an' keep a blaze.

What's de use o' gittin' skeery  
case dey's snow upon de  
groun'?

Huh-uh, I's a reg'lar snowbird ef  
dey's any possum 'roun'.

Go on, Spot, don' be so foolish;  
don' you see de signs o' feet.

What you howlin' fu? Keep still,  
suh, cose de col' is putty  
sweet;

But we goin' out on bus'ness, an'  
hit's bus'ness o' de kin'

Dat mus' put a dog an' dahky in  
a happy frame o' min'.

Yes, you 's col'; I know it, Spotty,  
but you des stay close to me,

An' I'll mek you hot ez cotton  
w'en we strikes de happy tree.

No, I don' lak wintah weathah,  
an' I'd wush 't uz allus  
June,

Ef it was n't fu' de trackin' o' de  
possum an' de coon.

### KEEP A SONG UP ON DE WAY

OH, de clouds is mighty heavy  
An' de rain is mighty thick;

Keep a song up on de way.  
An' de waters is a rumblin'  
On de boulders in de crick,

Keep a song up on de way.  
Fu' a bird ercross de road  
Is a-singin' lak he knowed  
Dat we people did n't daih  
Fu' to try de rainy aih

Wid a song up on de way.

What's de use o' gittin' mopy,  
Case de weather ain' de bes'!

Keep a song up on de way.  
W'en de rain is fallin' ha'des',  
Dey's de longes' times to res'

Keep a song up on de way.  
Dough de plough 's a-stan'in' still  
Dey'll be watah fu' de mill,  
Rain mus' come ez well ez sun  
'Fo' de weathah's wo'k is done,

Keep a song up on de way.

W'y hit 's nice to hyeah de showahs  
Fallin' down ermong de trees:

Keep a song up on de way.  
Ef de birds don' bothah 'bout it,  
But go singin' lak dey please,

Keep a song up on de way.  
You don' s'pose I's gwine to see  
Dem ah fowls do mo' dan me?

No, suh, I'll des chase dis frown,  
An' aldough de rain fall down,

Keep a song up on de way.



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

### THE TURNING OF THE BABIES IN THE BED

WOMAN's sho' a cur'ous critter,  
an' dey ain't no doubtin' dat.  
She's a mess o' funny capahs f'om  
huh slippahs to huh hat.

Ef you tries to un'erstan' huh, an'  
you fails, des' up an' say:

"D' ain't a bit o' use to try to  
un'erstan' a woman's way."

I don' mean to be complainin', but  
I's jes' a-settin' down

Some o' my own obserwations,  
w'en I cas' my eye eroun'.

Ef you ax me fu' to prove it, I  
ken do it mighty fine,

Fu' dey ain't no bettah 'zample  
den dis ve'y wife o' mine.

In de ve'y hea't o' midnight, w'en  
I's sleepin' good an' soun',

I kin hyeah a so't o' rustlin' an'  
somebody movin' 'roun'.

An' I say, "Lize, whut you do-  
in'?" But she frown an' shek  
huh haid,

"Heish yo' mouf, I's only tu'nin'  
of de chillun in de bed.

"Don' you know a chile gits rest-  
less, layin' all de night one  
way?

An' you' got to kind o' 'range him  
sev'al times befo' de day?

So de little necks won't worry, an'  
de little backs won't break;

Don' you t'ink case chillun's chil-  
lun dey hain't got no pain an'  
ache."

So she shakes 'em, an' she twists  
'em, an' she tu'ns 'em 'roun'  
erbout,

'Twell I don' see how de chillun  
evah keeps f'om hollahin' out.

Den she lif's 'em up head down-  
'ards, so 's dey won't git livah-  
grown,

But dey snoozes des' ez peaceful  
ez a liza'd on a stone.

W'en hit's mos' nigh time fu'  
wakin' on de dawn o' jedg-  
ment day,

Seems lak I kin hyeah ol' Gab'iel  
lay his trumpet down an' say,

"Who dat walkin' 'roun' so easy,  
down on earf ermong de  
dead?"—

'T will be Lizy up a-tu'nin' of de  
chillun in de bed.

### THE DANCE

HEEL and toe, heel and toe,  
That is the song we sing;

Turn to your partner and curtsy  
low,

Balance and forward and swing.  
Corners are draughty and meadows  
are white,

This is the game for a winter's  
night.



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Hands around, hands around,  
Trip it, and not too slow;  
Clear is the fiddle and sweet its  
sound,

Keep the girls' cheeks aglow.  
Still let your movements be dainty  
and light,  
This is the game for a winter's  
night.

Back to back, back to back,  
Turn to your place again;  
Never let lightness nor nimble-  
ness lack,

Either in maidens or men.  
Time hasteth ever, beware of its  
flight,  
Oh, what a game for a winter's  
night!

Slower now, slower now,  
Softer the music sighs;  
Look, there are beads on your  
partner's brow  
Though there be light in her  
eyes.

Lead her away and her grace re-  
quite,  
So goes the game on a winter's  
night.

### SOLILOQUY OF A TURKEY

DEY 's a so't o' threatenin' feelin'  
in de blowin' of de breeze,  
An' I 's feelin' kin' o' squeamish  
in de night;

I 's a-walkin' 'roun' a-lookin' at  
de diffunt style o' trees,  
An' a-measurin' dey thickness  
an' dey height.

Fu' dey 's somep'n mighty 'spicious  
in de looks de da'kies give,  
Ez dey pass me an' my fambly  
on de groun',

So it 'curs to me dat lakly, ef I  
caih's to try an' live,  
It concehns me fu' to 'mence to  
look erroun'.

Dey 's a cu'ious kin' o' shivah  
runnin' up an' down my back,  
An' I feel my feddahs rufflin'  
all de day,

An' my laigs commence to trimble  
evah blessid step I mek;

W'en I sees a ax, I tu'ns my  
head away.

Folks is go'gin' me wid goodies,  
an' dey 's treatin' me wid caih,  
An' I 's fat in spite of all dat I  
kin do.

I 's mistrus'ful of de kin'ness dat 's  
erroun' me evahwhaih,  
Fu' it 's jes' too good, an' fre-  
quent, to be true.

Snow 's a-fallin' on de medders, all  
erroun' me now is white,  
But I 's still kep' on a-roostin'  
on de fence;

Isham comes an' feels my breas'-  
bone, an' he hefted me las'  
night,

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

An' he 's gone erroun' a-grinnin'  
evah sence.

"T ain't de snow dat meks me  
shivah; 't ain't de col' dat  
meks me shake;

'T ain't de wintah-time itse'f  
dat 's 'fectin' me;

But I t'ink de time is comin',  
an' I 'd bettah mek a break,  
Fu' to set wid Mistah Possum  
in his tree.

W'en you hyeah de da'kies singin',  
an' de quahtahs all is gay,  
'T ain't de time fu' birds lak me  
to be 'erroun';

W'en de hick'ry chips is flyin', an'  
de log's been ca'ied erway,  
Den hit 's dang'ous to be roostin'  
nigh he groun'.

Grin on, Isham! Sing on, da'k-  
ies! But I flop my wings an'  
go

Fu' de sheltah of de ve'y high-  
est tree,

Fu' dey 's too much close ertention  
— an' dey's too much fallin'  
snow —

An' it's too nigh Chris'mus  
mo'nin' now fu' me.

### FISHING

W'EN I git up in de mo'nin' an'  
de clouds is big an' black,  
Dey 's a kin' o' wa'nin' shivah goes  
a-scootin' down my back;

Den I says to my ol' ooman ez I  
watches down de lane,

"Don't you so't o' reckon, Lizy,  
dat we gwine to have some  
rain?"

"Go on, man," my Lizy ansawah,  
"you cain't fool me, not a  
bit,

I don't see no rain a-comin', ef  
you 's wishin' fu' it, quit;

Case de mo' you t'ink erbout it, an  
de mo' you pray an' wish,

W'y de rain stay 'way de longah,  
spechul ef you wants to fish."

But I see huh pat de skillet, an' I  
see huh cas' huh eye

Wid a kin' o' anxious motion to'ds  
de da'kness in de sky;

An' I knows whut she 's a-t'inkin',  
dough she tries so ha'd to  
hide.

She 's a-sayin', "Would n't catfish  
now tas'e monst'ous bully,  
fried?"

Den de clouds git black an' black-  
ah, an' de thundah 'mence to  
roll,

An' de rain, it 'mence a-fallin'.  
Oh, I's happy, bless my  
soul!

Ez I look at dat ol' skillet, an' I  
'magine I kin see

Jes' a slew o' new-ketched catfish  
sizzlin' daih fu' huh an' me.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

'T ain't no use to go a-ploughin',  
fu' de groun' 'll be too  
wet,

So I puts out fu' de big house at  
a moughty pace, you bet,

An' ol' mastah say, "Well, Lishy,  
ef you t'ink hit's gwine to  
rain,

Go on fishin', hit's de weathah,  
an' I 'low we cain't com-  
plain."

Talk erbout a dahky walkin' wid  
his haid up in de aih!

Have to feel mine evah minute to  
be sho' I got it daih;

En' de win' is cuttin' capahs an'  
a-lashin' thoo de trees,

But de rain keeps on a-singin'  
blessed songs, lak "Tek yo'  
ease."

Wid my pole erpon my shouldah  
an' my wo'm can in my  
han',

I kin feel de fish a-waitin' w'en I  
strikes de rivah's san';

Nevah min', you ho'ny scoun'els,  
need n' swim erroun' an'  
grin,

I 'll be grinnin' in a minute w'en I  
'mence to haul you in.

W'en de fish begin to nibble, an'  
de co'k begin to jump,

I's erfeahed dat dey 'll quit bitin',  
case dey hyeah my hea't go  
"thump,"

'Twell de co'k go way down  
undah, an' I raise a awful  
shout,

Ez a big ol' yallah belly comes a  
gallivantin' out.

Need n't wriggle, Mistah Catfish,  
case I got you jes' de same,

You been eatin', I 'll be eatin', an'  
we needah ain't to blame.

But you need n't feel so lonesome  
fu' I 's th'owin' out to see

Ef dey ain't some of yo' comrades  
fu' to keep you company.

Spo't, dis fishin'! now you talkin',  
w'y dey ain't no kin' to beat;

I don' keer ef I is soakin', laigs,  
an' back, an' naik, an' feet,

It's de spo't I's lookin' aftah.  
Hit's de pleasure an' de fun,

Dough I knows dat Lizy's waitin'  
wid de skillet w'en I's done.

### A PLANTATION PORTRAIT

HAIN'T you see my Mandy Lou,  
Is it true?

Whaih you been f'om day to day,  
Whaih, I say?

Dat you say you nevah seen  
Dis hyeah queen

Walkin' roun' f'om fiel' to street  
Smilin' sweet?

Slendah ez a saplin' tree;  
Seems to me

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

W'en de win' blow f'om de bay  
She jes' sway  
Lak de reg'lar saplin' do  
Ef hit's grew  
Straight an' graceful, 'dout a limb,  
Sweet an' slim.

Browner den de frush's wing,  
An' she sing  
Lak he mek his wa'ble ring  
In de spring;  
But she sholy beat de frush,  
Hyeah me, hush:  
W'en she sing, huh teef kin show  
White ez snow.

Eyes ez big an' roun' an' bright  
Ez de light  
Whut de moon gives in de prime  
Harvest time.  
An' huh haih a woolly skein,  
Black an' plain.  
Hol's you wid a natchul twis'  
Close to bliss.

Tendah han's dat mek yo' own  
Feel lak stone;  
Easy steppin', blessid feet,  
Small an' sweet.  
Hain't you seen my Mandy Lou,  
Is it true?  
Look at huh befo' she's gone,  
Den pass on!

### A LITTLE CHRISTMAS BASKET

DE win' is hollahin' "Daih you"  
to de shuttahn an' de fiah,

De snow's a-sayin' "Got you" to  
de groun',  
Fu' de wintah weathah's come  
widout a-askin' ouah de-  
siah,  
An' he's laughin' in his sleeve  
at whut he foun';  
Fu' dey ain't nobody ready wid  
dey fuel er dey food,  
An' de money bag look timid  
lak, fu' sho',  
So we want ouah Chrismus  
sermon, but we'd lak it ef  
you could  
Leave a little Chrismus basket  
at de do'.

Wha's de use o' tellin' chillen  
'bout a Santy er a Nick,  
An' de sto'ies dat a body allus  
tol'?  
When de harf is gray wid ashes  
an' you has n't got a stick  
Fu' to warm dem when dey  
little toes is col'?  
Wha's de use o' preachin' 'ligion  
to a man dat's sta'ved to  
def,  
An' a-tellin' him de Mastah  
will pu'vide?  
Ef you want to tech his feelin's,  
save yo' sermons an' yo'  
bref,  
Tek a little Chrismus basket by  
yo' side.

'T ain't de time to open Bibles an'  
to lock yo' cellah do',

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

'T ain't de time to talk o' bein'  
good to men;

Ef you want to preach a sermon  
ez you nevah preached  
befo',

Preach dat sermon wid a shoat  
er wid er hen;

Bein' good is heap sight bettah den  
a-dallyin' wid sin,

An' dey ain't nobody roun' dat  
knows it mo',

But I t'ink dat 'ligion's sweeter  
w'en it kind o' mixes in

Wid a little Chrismus basket at  
de do'.

### THE VALSE

WHEN to sweet music my lady  
is dancing

My heart to mild frenzy her  
beauty inspires.

Into my face are her brown eyes  
a-glancing,

And swift my whole frame  
thrills with tremulous fires.

Dance, lady, dance, for the mo-  
ments are fleeting,

Pause not to place yon refractory  
curl;

Life is for love and the night is  
for sweeting;

Dreamily, joyously, circle and  
whirl.

Oh, how those viols are throbbing  
and pleading;

A prayer is scarce needed in  
sound of their strain.

Surely and lightly as round you  
are speeding,

You turn to confusion my heart  
and my brain.

Dance, lady, dance to the viol's  
soft calling,

Skip it and trip it as light as the  
air;

Dance, for the moments like rose  
leaves are falling,

Strikes, now, the clock from its  
place on the stair.

Now sinks the melody lower and  
lower,

The weary musicians scarce  
seeming to play.

Ah, love, your steps now are  
slower and slower,

The smile on your face is more  
sad and less gay.

Dance, lady, dance to the brink of  
our parting,

My heart and your step must not  
fail to be light.

Dance! Just a turn — tho' the  
tear-drop be starting.

Ah — now it is done — so —  
my lady, good-night!

### REPOSE

WHEN Phyllis sighs and from her  
eyes

The light dies out; my soul re-  
plies

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

With misery of deep-drawn breath,  
E'en as it were at war with  
death.

When Phyllis smiles, her glance  
beguiles

My heart through love-lit wood-  
land aisles,

And through the silence high and  
clear,

A wooing warbler's song I hear.

But if she frown, despair comes  
down,

I put me on my sack-cloth gown;  
So frown not, Phyllis, lest I die,  
But look on me with smile or  
sigh.

### MY SWEET BROWN GAL

W'EN de clouds is hangin' heavy  
in de sky,

An' de win's's a-taihin' moughty  
vig'rous by,

I don' go a-sighin' all erlong de  
way;

I des' wo'k a-waitin' fu' de close  
o' day.

Case I knows w'en evenin' draps  
huh shadders down,

I won' care a smidgeon fu' de  
weathah's frown;

Let de rain go splashin', let de  
thundah raih,

Dey's a happy sheltah, an' I's  
goin' daih.

Down in my ol' cabin wa'm ez  
mammy's toas',

'Taters in de fiah layin' daih to  
roas';

No one daih to cross me, got no  
talkin' pal,

But I's got de comp'ny o' my  
sweet brown gal.

So I spen's my evenin' listenin' to  
huh sing,

Lak a blessid angel; how huh  
voice do ring!

Sweetah den a bluebird flutterin'  
erroun',

W'en he sees de steamin' o' de  
new ploughed groun'.

Den I hugs huh closah, closah to  
my breas'.

Need n't sing, my da'lin', tek you'  
hones' res'.

Does I mean Malindy, Mandy,  
Lize er Sal?

No, I means my fiddle — dat's  
my sweet brown gal!

### SPRING FEVER

GRASS commence a-comin'  
Thoo de thawin' groun',

Evah bird dat whistles

Keepin' noise erroun';

Cain't sleep in de mo'nin',

Case befo' it's light

Bluebird an' de robin,

Done begun to fight.



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Bluebird sass de robin,  
Robin sass him back,  
Den de bluebird scol' him  
'Twell his face is black.  
Would n' min' de quoilin'  
All de mo'nin' long,  
'Cept it wakes me early,  
Case hit's done in song.

Anybody wo'kin'  
Wants to sleep ez late  
Ez de folks'll 'low him,  
An' I wish to state  
(Co'se dis ain't to scattah,  
But 'twix' me an' you),  
I could stan' de bedclothes,  
Kin' o' latah, too.

'T ain't my natchul feelin',  
Dis hyeah mopin' spell.  
I stan's early risin'  
Mos'ly moughty well;  
But de ve'y minute,  
I feel Ap'il's heat,  
Bless yo' soul, de bedclothes  
Nevah seemed so sweet.

Mastah, he's a-scol'in',  
Case de han's is slow,  
All de hosses balkin',  
Jes' cain't mek 'em go.  
Don' know whut's de mattah,  
Hit's a funny t'ing,  
Less'n hit's de fevah  
Dat you gits in spring.

## THE VISITOR

LITTLE lady at de do',  
W'y you stan' dey knockin'?  
Nevah seen you ac' befo'  
In er way so shockin'.  
Don' you know de sin it is  
Fu' to git my temper riz  
W'en I's got de rheumatiz  
An' my jints is lockin'?

No, ol' Miss ain't sont you down,  
Don' you tell no story;  
I been seed you hangin' 'roun'  
Dis hyeah te'itory.  
You des come fu' me to tell  
You a tale, an' I ain'—  
well —  
Look hyeah, what is dat I  
smell?

Steamin' victuals? Glory!  
Come in, Missy, how you do?  
Come up by de fiah,  
I was jokin', chile, wid you;  
Bring dat basket nighah.  
Huh uh, ain't dat lak ol'  
Miss,  
Sen'in' me a feas' lak dis?  
Rheumatiz cain't stop my  
bliss,  
Case I's feelin' spryah.

Chicken meat an' gravy, too,  
Hot an' still a-heatin';  
Good ol' sweet pertater stew;  
Missy b'lieves in treatin'.  
Des set down, you blessed  
chile,



# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Daddy got to t'ink a while,  
Den a story mek you smile  
W'en he git thoo eatin'.

## SONG

WINTAH, summah, snow er  
shine,

Hit 's all de same to me,  
Ef only I kin call you mine,  
An' keep you by my knee.

Ha'dship, frolic, grief er caih,  
Content by night an' day,  
Ef only I kin see you whaih  
You wait beside de way.

Livin', dyin', smiles er teahs,  
My soul will still be free,  
Ef only thoo de comin' yeahs  
You walk de worl' wid me.

Bird-song, breeze-wail, chune er  
moan,

What puny t'ings dey 'll be,  
Ef w'en I 's seemin' all erlone,  
I knows yo' hea't 's wid me.

## THE COLORED BAND

W'EN de colo'ed ban' comes  
ma'chin' down de street,

Don't you people stan' daih  
starin'; lif' yo' feet!

Ain't dey playin'? Hip, hoo-  
ray!

Stir yo' stumps an' cleah de  
way,  
Fu' de music dat dey mekin' can't  
be beat.

Oh, de major man 's a-swingin'  
of his stick,  
An' de pickaninnies crowdin'  
roun' him thick;

In his go'geous uniform,  
He 's de lightnin' of de sto'm,  
An' de little clouds erroun' look  
mighty slick.

You kin hyeah a fine perfo'mance  
w'en de white ban's sere-  
nade,

An' dey play dey high-toned  
music mighty sweet,  
But hit 's Sousa played in rag-  
time, an' hit 's Rastus on  
Parade,

W'en de colo'ed ban' comes  
ma'chin' down de street.

W'en de colo'ed ban' comes ma'ch  
in' down de street

You kin hyeah de ladies all erroun'  
repeat:

"Ain't dey handsome? Ain't  
dey gran'?

Ain't dey splendid? Goodness,  
lan'!

W'y dey 's pu'fect f'om dey fo-  
heads to dey feet!"

An' sich steppin' to de music down  
de line,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

'Tain't de music by itself dat meks  
it fine,  
Hit's de walkin', step by step,  
An' de keepin' time wid "Hep,"  
Dat it mek a common ditty soun'  
divine.

Oh, de white ban' play hits music,  
an' hit's mighty good to  
hyeah,  
An' it sometimes leaves a ticklin'  
in yo' feet;  
But de hea't goes into bus'ness fu'  
to he'p erlong de eah,  
W'en de colo'ed ban' goes ma'ch-  
in' down de street.

### TO A VIOLET FOUND ON ALL SAINTS' DAY

BELATED wanderer of the ways of  
spring,  
Lost in the chill of grim No-  
vember rain,  
Would I could read the message  
that you bring  
And find in it the antidote for  
pain.

Does some sad spirit out beyond  
the day,  
Far looking to the hours forever  
dead,  
Send you a tender offering to lay  
Upon the grave of us, the liv-  
ing dead?

Or does some brighter spirit, un-  
forlorn,  
Send you, my little sister of the  
wood,  
To say to some one on a cloudful  
morn,  
"Life lives through death, my  
brother, all is good?"

With meditative hearts the others  
go  
The memory of their dead to  
dress anew.  
But, sister mine, bide here that I  
may know,  
Life grows, through death, as  
beautiful as you.

### INSPIRATION

At the golden gate of song  
Stood I, knocking all day long,  
But the Angel, calm and cold,  
Still refused and bade me, "Hold."

Then a breath of soft perfume,  
Then a light within the gloom;  
Thou, Love, camest to my side,  
And the gates flew open wide.

Long I dwelt in this domain,  
Knew no sorrow, grief, or pain;  
Now you bid me forth and free,  
Will you shut these gates on me?

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

### MY LADY OF CASTLE GRAND

GRAY is the palace where she  
dwells,

Grimly the poplars stand  
There by the window where she  
sits,

My Lady of Castle Grand.

There does she bide the livelong  
day,

Grim as the poplars are,  
Ever her gaze goes reaching out,  
Steady, but vague and far.

Bright burn the fires in the castle  
hall,

Brightly the fire-dogs stand;  
But cold is the body and cold the  
heart

Of my Lady of Castle Grand.

Blue are the veins in her lily-white  
hands,

Blue are the veins in her brow;  
Thin is the line of her blue drawn  
lips,

Who would be haughty now?

Pale is the face at the window-  
pane,

Pale as the pearl on her breast,  
"Roderick, love, wilt come again?  
Fares he to east or west?"

The shepherd pipes to the shep-  
herdess,

The bird to his mate in the  
tree,

And ever she sighs as she hears  
their song,

"Nobody sings for me."

The scullery maids have swains  
enow

Who lead them the way of love,  
But lonely and loveless their mis-  
tress sits

At her window up above.

Loveless and lonely she waits and  
waits,

The saddest in all the land;  
Ah, cruel and lasting is love-blind  
pride,

My Lady of Castle Grand.

### DRIZZLE

HIT 's been drizzlin' an' been  
sprinklin',

Kin' o' techy all day long.

I ain't wet enough fu' toddy,

I 's too damp to raise a song,

An' de case have set me t'inkin',

Dat dey 's folk des lak de rain,

Dat goes drizzlin' w'en dey 's  
talkin',

An' won't speak out flat an'  
plain.

Ain't you nevah set an' listened  
At a body 'splain his min'?

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

W'en de t'oughts dey keep on  
drappin'

Was n't big enough to fin'?  
Dem's whut I call drizzlin'  
people,

Othahs call 'em mealy mouf,  
But de fust name hits me bettah,  
Case dey nevah tech a drouf.

Dey kin talk from hyeah to yandah,  
An' f'om yandah hyeah ergain,  
An' dey don' mek no mo' 'pression,  
Den dis powd'ry kin' o' rain.

En yo' min' is dry ez cindahs,  
Er a piece o' kindlin' wood,  
'T ain't no use a-talkin' to 'em,  
Fu' dey drizzle ain't no good.

Gimme folks dat speak out nachul,  
Whut 'll say des whut dey mean,  
Whut don't set dey wo'ds so  
skimpy

Dat you got to guess between.  
I want talk des' lak de showahs  
Whut kin wash de dust erway,  
Not dat sprinklin' convusation,  
Dat des drizzle all de day.

### DE CRITTERS' DANCE

AIN'T nobody nevah tol' you not a  
wo'd a-tall,  
'Bout de time dat all de critters  
gin dey fancy ball?  
Some folks tell it in a sto'y, some  
folks sing de rhyme,  
'Peahs to me you ought to hyeahed  
it, case hit's ol' ez time.

Well, de critters all was p'osp'ous,  
now would be de chance

Fu' to tease ol' Pa'son Hedgehog,  
givin' of a dance;

Case, you know, de critters'  
preachah was de stric'est kin',  
An' he nevah made no 'lowance fu'  
de frisky min'.

So dey sont dey inbitations, Rac-  
coon writ 'em all,

"Dis hyeah note is to inbite you  
to de Fancy Ball;

Come erlong an' bring yo' ladies,  
bring yo' chillun too,

Put on all yo' bibs an' tuckahs,  
show whut you kin do."

W'en de night come, dey all  
gathahed in a place dey  
knowed,

Fu' enough erway f'om people,  
nigh enough de road,

All de critters had ersponded, Hop-  
Toad up to Baih,

An' I's hyeah to tell you, Pa'son  
Hedgehog too, was daih.

Well, dey talked an' made dey  
'bejunce, des lak critters  
do,

An' dey walked an' p'omenaded  
'roun' an' thoo an' thoo;

Jealous ol' Mis' Fox, she whispah,  
"See Mis' Wildcat daih,

Ain't hit scan'lous, huh a-comin'  
wid huh shouldahs baih?"

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Ol' man T'utle was n't honin' fu'  
no dancin' tricks,

So he stayed by ol' Mis' Tu'tle,  
talkin' politics;

Den de ban' hit 'mence a-playin'  
critters all to place,

Fou' ercross an' fou' stan' side-  
ways, smilin' face to face.

'Fessah Frog, he play de co'net,  
Cricket play de fife,

Slews o' Grasshoppahs a-fiddlin'  
lak to save dey life;

Mistah Crow, 'he call de figgers,  
settin' in a tree,

Huh, uh! how dose critters sas-  
shayed was a sight to see.

Mistah Possom swing Mis' Rab-  
bit up an' down de flo',

Ol' man Baih, he ain't so nimble,  
an' it mek him blow;

Raccoon dancin' wid Mis' Squ'il  
squeeze huh little han',

She say, "Oh, now ain't you aw-  
ful, quit it, goodness lan'!"

Pa'son Hedgehog groanin' awful at  
his converts' shines,

'Dough he peepin' thoo his fingahs  
at dem movin' lines,

'Twell he cain't set still no longah  
w'en de fiddles sing,

Up he jump, an' bless you, honey,  
cut de pigeon-wing.

Well, de critters lak to fainted jes'  
wid dey su'prise,

Sistah Fox, she vowed she was n't  
gwine to b'lieve huh eyes;

But dey could n't be no 'sputin'  
'bout it any mo':

Pa'son Hedgehog was a-cape'in' all  
erroun' de flo.'

Den dey all jes' capahed scan'lous  
case dey did n't doubt,

Dat dey still could go to meetin';  
who could tu'n 'em out?

So wid dancin' an' uligion, dey  
was in de fol',

Fu' a-dancin' wid de Pa'son could-  
n't hu't de soul.

### WHEN DEY 'LISTED COL- ORED SOLDIERS

DEY was talkin' in de cabin, dey  
was talkin' in de hall;

But I listened kin' o' keerless, not  
a-t'inkin' 'bout it all;

An' on Sunday, too, I noticed, dey  
was whisp'rin' mighty much,

Stan'in' all erroun' de roadside  
w'en dey let us out o'  
chu'ch.

But I did n't t'ink erbout it 'twell  
de middle of de week,

An' my 'Lias come to see me, an'  
somehow he could n't speak.

Den I seed all in a minute whut  
he'd come to see me  
for;—

Dey had 'listed colo'ed sojers an'  
my 'Lias gwine to wah.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Oh, I hugged him, an' I kissed  
him, an' I baiged him not to  
go;  
But he tol' me dat his conscience,  
hit was callin' to him so,  
An' he could n't baih to lingah  
w'en he had a chanst to  
fight  
For de freedom dey had gin him  
an' de glory of de right.  
So he kissed me, an' he lef' me,  
w'en I'd p'omised to be true;  
An' dey put a knapsack on him,  
an' a coat all colo'ed blue.  
So I gin him pap's ol' Bible f'om  
de bottom of de draw',—  
W'en dey 'listed colo'ed sojers an'  
my 'Lias went to wah.

But I t'ought of all de weary miles  
dat he would have to tramp,  
An' I could n't be contented w'en  
dey tuk him to de camp.  
W'y my hea't nigh broke wid  
grievin' 'twell I seed him on  
de street;  
Den I felt lak I could go an' th'ow  
my body at his feet.  
For his buttons was a-shinin', an'  
his face was shinin', too,  
An' he looked so strong an' mighty  
in his coat o' sojer blue,  
Dat I hollahed, "Step up, man-  
ny," dough my th'roat was so'  
an' raw,—  
W'en dey 'listed colo'ed sojers an'  
my 'Lias went to wah.

Ol' Mis' cried w'en mastah lef'  
huh, young Miss mou'ned huh  
brothah Ned,  
An' I did n't know dey feelin's is  
de ve'y wo'ds dey said  
W'en I tol' 'em I was so'y. Dey  
had done gin up dey all;  
But dey only seemed mo' proudah  
dat dey men had hyeahed de  
call.  
Bofe my mastahs went in gray  
suits, an' I loved de Yankee  
blue,  
But I t'ought dat I could sorrer  
for de losin' of 'em too;  
But I could n't, for I did n't know  
de ha'f o' whut I saw,  
'Twell dey 'listed colo'ed sojers an'  
my 'Lias went to wah.

Mastah Jack come home all sickly;  
he was broke for life, dey  
said;  
An' dey lef' my po' young mastah  
some'r's on de roadside,—  
dead.  
W'en de women cried an' mou'ned  
'em, I could feel it thoo an'  
thoo,  
For I had a loved un fightin' in de  
way o' dangah, too.  
Den dey tol' me dey had laid him  
some'r's way down souf to  
res',  
Wid de flag dat he had fit for  
shinin' daih acrost his  
breas'.



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Well, I cried, but den I reckon  
dat's whut Gawd had called  
him for,  
W'en dey 'listed colo'ed sojers an'  
my 'Lias went to wah.

### LINCOLN

HURT was the nation with a  
mighty wound,  
And all her ways were filled with  
clam'rous sound.  
Wailed loud the South with unre-  
mitting grief,  
And wept the North that could  
not find relief.  
Then madness joined its harshest  
tone to strife:  
A minor note swelled in the song  
of life.  
'Till, stirring with the love that  
filled his breast,  
But still, unflinching at the right's  
behest,  
Grave Lincoln came, strong  
handed, from afar,  
The mighty Homer of the lyre of  
war.  
'T was he who bade the raging  
tempest cease,  
Wrenched from his harp the har-  
mony of peace,  
Muted the strings, that made the  
discord,—Wrong,  
And gave his spirit up in thun-  
d'rous song.

Oh mighty Master of the mighty  
lyre,  
Earth heard and trembled at thy  
strains of fire:  
Earth learned of thee what Heav'n  
already knew,  
And wrote thee down among her  
treasured few.

### ENCOURAGEMENT

WHO dat knockin' at de do'?  
Why, Ike Johnson,—yes, fu' sho!  
Come in, Ike. I's mighty glad  
You come down. I t'ought you's  
mad  
At me 'bout de othah night,  
An' was stayin' 'way fu' spite.  
Say, now, was you mad fu' true  
W'en I kin' o' laughed at you?  
Speak up, Ike, an' 'spress yo'se'f.

'T ain't no use a-lookin' sad,  
An' a-mekin' out you's mad;  
Ef you's gwine to be so glum,  
Wondah why you evah come.  
I don't lak nobidy 'roun'  
Dat jes' shet dey mouf an'  
frown,—  
Oh, now, man, don't act a dunce!  
Cain't you talk? I tol' you once,  
Speak up, Ike, an' 'spress yo'se'f.

Wha'd you come hyeah fu' to-  
night?  
Body'd t'ink yo' haid ain't right.  
I's done all dat I kin do,—



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Dressed perticler, jes' fu' you;  
Reckon I'd 'a' bettah wo'  
My ol' ragged calico.  
Aftah all de pains I's took,  
Cain't you tell me how I look?  
Speak up, Ike, an' 'spress yo'se'f.

Bless my soul! I 'mos' fu'got  
Tellin' you 'bout Tildy Scott.  
Don't you know, come Thu'sday  
night,  
She gwine ma'y Lucius White?  
Miss Lize say I allus wuh  
Heap sight laklier 'n huh;  
An' she'll git me somep'n new,  
Ef I wants to ma'y too.  
Speak up, Ike, an' 'spress yo'se'f.

I could ma'y in a week,  
Ef de man-I wants 'ud speak.  
Tildy's presents'll be fine,  
But dey would n't ekal mine.  
Him whut gits me fu' a wife  
'Ll be proud, you bet yo' life.  
I's had offers; some ain't quit;  
But I has n't ma'ied yit!  
Speak up, Ike, an' 'spress yo'se'f.

Ike, I loves you,—yes, I does;  
You's my choice, and allus was.  
Laffin' at you ain't no harm.—  
Go 'way, dahky, whah's yo' arm?  
Hug me closer—dah, dat's  
right!  
Was n't you a awful sight,  
Havin' me to baig you so?  
Now ax whut you want to  
know,—  
Speak up, Ike, an' 'spress yo'se'f!

## THE BOOGAH MAN

W'EN de evenin' shadders  
Come a-glidin' down,  
Fallin' black an' heavy  
Ovah hill an' town,  
Ef you listen keerful,  
Keerful ez you kin,  
So's you boun' to notice  
Des a drappin' pin;  
Den you'll hyeah a funny  
Soun' ercross de lan';  
Lay low; dat's de callin'  
Of de Boogah Man!

*Woo-oo, woo-oo!*

*Hyeah him ez he go erlong de  
way;*

*Woo-oo, woo-oo!*

*Don' you wish de night 'ud tu'n  
to day?*

*Woo-oo, woo-oo!*

*Hide yo' little peepers 'hind yo'  
han';*

*Woo-oo, woo-oo!*

*Callin' of de Boogah Man.*

W'en de win's a-shiverin'  
Thoo de gloomy lane,  
An' dey comes de patterin'  
Of de evenin' rain,  
W'en de owl's a-hootin',  
Oût daih in de wood,  
Don' you wish, my honey,  
Dat you had been good?  
'T ain't no use to try to  
Snuggle up to Dan;  
Bless you, dat's de callin'  
Of de Boogah Man!

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Ef you loves yo' mammy,  
An' you min's yo' pap,  
Ef you nevah wriggles  
Outen Sukey's lap;  
Ef you says yo' "Lay me"  
Evah single night  
'Fo' dey tucks de kivers  
An' puts out de light,  
Den de rain kin pattah  
Win' blow lak a fan,  
But you need n' bothah  
'Bout de Boogah Man!

### THE WRAITH

AH me, it is cold and chill  
And the fire sobs low in the  
grate,  
While the wind rides by on the  
hill,  
And the logs crack sharp with  
hate.

And she, she is cold and sad  
As ever the sinful are,  
But deep in my heart I am glad  
For my wound and the coming  
scar.

Oh, ever the wind rides by  
And ever the raindrops grieve;  
But a voice like a woman's sigh  
Says, "Do you believe, be-  
lieve?"

Ah, you were warm and sweet,  
Sweet as the May days be;

Down did I fall at your feet,  
Why did you hearken to me?

Oh, the logs they crack and whine,  
And the water drops from the  
eaves;

But it is not rain but brine  
Where my dead darling grieves.

And a wraith sits by my side,  
A spectre grim and dark;  
Are you gazing here open-eyed  
Out to the lifeless dark?

But ever the wind rides on,  
And we sit close within;  
Out of the face of the dawn,  
I and my darling,—sin.

### "SILENCE"

'T is better to sit here beside the  
sea,  
Here on the spray-kissed beach,  
In silence, that between such  
friends as we  
Is full of deepest speech.

### WHIP-POOR-WILL AND KATY-DID

SLOW de night's a-fallin',  
An' I hyeah de callin,  
Out erpon de lonesome hill;  
Soun' is moughty dreary,  
Solemn-lak an' skeery,  
Sayin' fu' to "whip po' Will."

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Now hit's moughty tryin',  
Fu' to hyeah dis cryin',  
'Deed hit's mo' den I kin stan';  
Sho' wid all our slippin',  
Dey's enough of whippin'  
'Dout a bird a'visin' any man.

In de noons o' summah  
Dey's anothah hummah  
Sings anothah song instid;  
An' his th'ot's a-swellin'  
Wid de joy o' tellin',  
But he says dat "Katy did."

Now I feels onsuhtain;  
Won't you raise de cu'tain  
Ovah all de ti'ngs dat's hid?  
W'y dat feathahed p'isen  
Goes erbout a-visin'  
Whippin' Will w'en Katy  
did?

### 'LONG TO'DS NIGHT

DAIH's a moughty soothin'  
feelin'  
Hits a dahky man,  
'Long to'ds night.  
W'en de row is mos' nigh ended,  
Den he stops to fan,  
'Long to'ds night.  
De blue smoke f'om his cabin  
is a-callin' to him  
"Come;"  
De smell de bacon cookin', an' he  
hyeah de fiah hum;

An' he 'mence to sing, 'dough  
wo'kin' putty nigh  
done made him dumb,  
'Long to'ds night.

Wid his hoe erpon his shouldah  
Den he goes erlong,  
'Long to'ds night.

An' he keepin' time a-steppin'  
Wid a little song,  
'Long to'ds night.

De restin'-time's a-comin', an' de  
time to drink an' eat;  
A baby's toddlin' to'ds him on hits  
little dusty feet,

An' a-goin' to'ds his cabin, an'  
his suppah's moughty  
sweet,  
'Long to'ds night.

Daih his Ca'line min' de kettle,  
Rufus min' de chile,  
'Long to'ds night;

An' de sweat roll down his  
forred,

Mixin' wid his smile,  
'Long to'ds night.

He toss his piccaninny, an' he hum  
a little chune;

De wokin' all is ovah, an' de sup-  
pah comin' soon;

De wo'kin' time's Decembah, but  
de restin' time is  
June,

'Long to'ds night.

Dey's a kin' o' doleful feelin',  
Hits a tendah place,  
'Long to'ds night;

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Dey's a moughty glory in him  
Shinin' thoo his face,

Long to'ds night.

De cabin's lak de big house, an'  
de fiah's lak de sun;

His wife look moughty lakly, an'  
de chile de puttiest  
one;

W'y, hit's blessid, jes' a-livin'  
w'en a body's wo'k is  
done.

'Long to'ds night.

### A GRIEVANCE

W'EN de snow's a-fallin'  
An' de win' is col'.

Mammy 'mence a-callin',  
Den she 'mence to scol',

"Lucius Lishy Brackett,  
Don't you go out do's,

Button up yo' jacket,  
Les'n you'll git froze."

I sit at de windah

Lookin' at de groun',

Nuffin nigh to hindah,

Mammy ain' erroun';

Wish't she would n' mek me

Set down in dis chaih;

Pshaw, it would n't tek me

Long to git some aih.

So I jump down nimble

Ez a boy kin be,

Dough I's all a-trimble

Feahed some one'll see;

Bet in a half a minute

I fly out de do'

An' I's knee-deep in it,  
Dat dah blessed snow.

Den I hyeah a pattah  
Come acrost de flo'.

Den dey comes a clattah  
At de cabin do';

An' my mammy holler

Spoilin' all my joy,

"Come in f'om dat waller,  
Don't I see you, boy?"

W'en de snow's a-sievin'

Down ez sof' ez meal,

Whut's de use o' livin'

'Cept you got de feel

Of de stuff dat's fallin'

'Roun' an' white an' damp,

'Deut some one a-callin',

"Come in hyeah, you scamp!

### DINAH KNEADING DOUGH

I HAVE seen full many a sight

Born of day or drawn by night

Sunlight on a silver stream,

Golden lilies all a-dream,

Lofty mountains, bold and proud

Veiled beneath the lacelike cloud

But no lovely sight I know

Equals Dinah kneading dough.

Brown arms buried elbow-deep

Their domestic rhythm keep,

As with steady sweep they go

Through the gently yielding

dough.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Maids may vaunt their finer  
charms—

Naught to me like Dinah's arms;

Girls may draw, or paint, or  
sew —

I love Dinah kneading dough.

Eyes of jet and teeth of pearl,

Hair, some say, too tight a-curl;

But the dainty maid I deem

Very near perfection's dream.

Swift she works, and only flings

Mé a glance — the least of things.

And I wonder, does she know

That my heart is in the dough?

### TO A CAPTIOUS CRITIC

DEAR critic, who my lightness so  
deplores,

Would I might study to be prince  
of bores,

Right wisely would I rule that  
dull estate —

But, sir, I may not, till you  
abdicate.

### DAT OL' MARE O' MINE

WANT to trade me, do you, mis-  
tah? Oh, well, now, I  
reckon not,

W'y you could n't buy my Sukey  
fu' a thousan' on de spot.

Dat ol' mare o' mine?

Yes, huh coat ah long an' shaggy,  
an' she ain't no shakes to  
see;

Dat's a ring-bone, yes, you right,  
suh, an' she got a on'ry  
knee,

But dey ain't no use in talkin',  
she de only hoss fu' me,

Dat ol' mare o' mine.

Co'se, I knows dat Suke's con-  
tra'y, an' she moughty ap'  
to vex;

But you got to mek erlowance fu'  
de nature of huh sex;

Dat ol' mare o' mine.

Ef you pull her on de lef' han';  
she plum 'termined to go  
right,

A cannon could n't skeer huh, but  
she boun' to tek a fright

At a piece o' common paper, or  
anyt'ing whut's white,

Dat ol' mare o' mine.

W'en my eyes commence to fail  
me, dough, I trus'es to  
huh sight,

An' she 'll tote me safe an' hones'  
on de ve'y da'kes' night,  
Dat ol' mare o' mine.

Ef I whup huh, she jes' switch  
huh tail, an' settle to a  
walk,

Ef I whup huh mo', she shek huh  
haid, an' lak ez not, she  
balk.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

But huh sense ain't no ways  
lackin', she do evah t'ing  
but talk,  
Dat ol' mare o' mine.

But she gentle ez a lady w'en she  
know huh beau kin see.

An' she sholy got mo' gumption  
any day den you or me,  
Dat ol' mare o' mine.

She's a leetle slow a-goin', an' she  
moughty ha'd to sta't,

But we's gittin' ol' togathah, an'  
she's closah to my hea't,

An' I does n't reckon, mistah, dat  
she'd sca'cely keer to pa't;  
Dat ol' mare o' mine.

W'y I knows de time dat cidah's  
kin' o' muddled up my haid,  
Ef it had n't been fu' Sukey  
hyeah, I reckon I'd been  
daid;

Dat ol' mare o' mine.

But she got me in de middle o'  
de road an' tuk me  
home,

An' she would n't let me wandah,  
ner she would n't let me  
roam,

Dat's de kin' o' hoss to tie to  
w'en you's seed de cidah's  
foam,

Dat ol' mare o' mine.

You kin talk erbout yo' heaven,  
you kin talk erbout yo' hell,

Dey is people, dey is hosses, den  
dey's cattle, den dey's—  
well—

Dat ol' mare o' mine;

She de beatenes' t'ing dat evah  
struck de medders o' de  
town,

An' aldough huh haid ain't fittin'  
fu' to waih no golden  
crown.

D' ain't a blessed way fu' Petah  
fu' to tu'n my Sukey down,

Dat ol' mare o' mine.

### IN THE MORNING

'Lias! 'Lias! Bless de Lawd!  
Don' you know de day's  
erbroad?

Ef you don' git up, you scamp,  
Dey'll be trouble in dis camp.  
T'ink I gwine to let you sleep  
W'ile I meks yo' boa'd an' keep?  
Dat's a putty howdy-do—  
Don' you hyeah me, 'Lias—you?

Bet ef I come crost dis flo'  
You won' fin' no time to sno'.  
Daylight all a-shinin' in  
W'ile you sleep—w'y hit's a sin!  
Ain't de can'le-light enough  
To bu'n out widout a snuff,  
But you go de mo'nin' thoo  
Bu'nin' up de daylight too?

'Lias, don' you hyeah me call?  
No use tu'nin' to'ds de wall;

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

I kin hyeah dat mattuss squeak;  
Don' you hyeah me w'en I speak?  
Dis hyeah clock done struck off  
six —

Ca'line, bring me dem ah sticks!  
Oh, you down, suh; huh, you  
down —

Look hyeah, don' you daih to  
frown.

Ma'ch yo'se'f an' wash yo' face,  
Don' you splattah all de place;  
I got somep'n else to do,  
'Sides jes' cleanin' aftah you.  
Tek dat comb an' fix yo' haid —  
Looks jes' lak a feddah baid.  
Look hyeah, boy, I let you see  
You sha' n't roll yo' eyes at me.

Come hyeah; bring me dat ah  
strap!

Boy, I'll whup you 'twell you  
drap;

You done felt yo'se'f too strong,  
An' you sholy got me wrong.  
Set down at dat table thaih;  
Jes' you whimpah ef you daih!  
Evah mo'nin' on dis place,  
Seem lak I mus' lose my grace.

Fol' yo' han's an' bow yo' haid —  
Wait ontwell de blessin' 's said;  
"Lawd, have mussy on ouah  
souls —"

(Don' you daih to tech dem  
rolls —)

"Bless de food we gwine to  
eat —"

(You set still — I *see* yo' feet;  
You jes' try dat trick agin!)  
"Gin us peace an' joy. Amen!"

### THE POET

HE sang of life, serenely sweet,  
With, now and then, a deeper  
note.

From some high peak, nigh yet  
remote,  
He voiced the world's absorbing  
beat.

He sang of love when earth was  
young,  
And Love, itself, was in his  
lays.

But ah, the world, it turned to  
praise  
A jingle in a broken tongue.

### A FLORIDA NIGHT

WIN' a-blowin' gentle so de san'  
lay low,

San' a little heavy f'om de rain,  
All de pa'ms a-wavin' an' a-weav-  
in' slow,

Sighin' lak a sinnah-soul in  
pain.

Alligator grinnin' by de ol'  
lagoon,

Mockin'-bird a-singin' to be big  
full moon,



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

'Skeeter go a-skimmin' to his  
fightin' chune

(Lizy Ann's a-waitin' in de  
lane!).

Moccasin a-sleepin' in de cyprus  
swamp;

Need n't wake de gent'man, not  
fu' me.

Mule, you need n't wake him  
w'en you switch an' stomp,  
Fightin' off a 'skeeter er a flea.  
Florida is lovely, she's de fines'  
lan'

Evah seed de sunlight f'om de  
Mastah's han',

'Ceptin' fu' de varmints an' huh  
fleas an' san'

An' de nights w'en Lizy Ann  
ain' free.

Moon's a-kinder shaddered on de  
melon patch;

No one ain't a-watchin' ez I  
go.

Climbin' of de fence so's not to  
click de latch

Meks my gittin' in a little  
slow.

Watermelon smilin' as it say,  
"I's free;"

Alligator boomin', but I let him  
be,

Florida, oh, Florida's de lan' fu'  
me —

(Lizy Ann a-singin' sweet an'  
low).

## DIFFERENCES

My neighbor lives on the hill,  
And I in the valley dwell,  
My neighbor must look down on  
me,

Must I look up? — ah, well,  
My neighbor lives on the hill,  
And I in the valley dwell.

My neighbor reads, and prays,  
And I — I laugh, God wot,  
And sing like a bird when the  
grass is green

In my small garden plot;  
But ah, he reads and prays,  
And I — I laugh, God wot.

His face is a book of woe,  
And mine is a song of glee;  
A slave he is to the great "They  
say,"

But I — I am bold and free;  
No wonder he smacks of woe,  
And I have the tang of glee.

My neighbor thinks me a fool,  
"The same to yourself," say I;  
"Why take your books and take  
your prayers,

Give me the open sky;"  
My neighbor thinks me a fool,  
"The same to yourself," say I

## LONG AGO

DE ol' time's gone, de new  
time's hyeah

Wid all hits fuss an' feddahs;

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

I done fu'got de joy an' cheah  
We knowed all kin's o' wed-  
dahs,

I done fu'got each ol'-time hymn  
We ust to sing in meetin';  
I's leahned de prah's, so neat an'  
trim,  
De preachah keeps us 'peatin'.

Hang a vine by de chimney side,  
An' one by de cabin do';  
An' sing a song fu' de day dat  
died,  
De day of long ergo.

My youf, hit's gone, yes, long  
ergo,

An' yit I ain't a-moanin';  
Hit's fu' somet'ings I ust to  
know

I set to-night a-honin'.  
De pallet on de ol' plank flo',  
De rain bar'l und' de eaves,  
De live oak 'fo' de cabin do',  
Whaih de night dove comes an'  
grieves.

Hang a vine by de chimney side,  
An' one by de cabin do';  
An' sing a song fu' de day dat  
died,  
De day of long ergo.

I'd lak a few ol' frien's to-night  
To come an' set wid me;  
An' let me feel dat ol' delight  
I ust to in dey glee.  
But hyeah we is, my pipe an' me,  
Wid no one else erbout;

We bofe is choked ez choked kin  
be,  
An' bofe 'll soon go out.

Hang a vine by de chimney side,  
An' one by de cabin do';  
An' sing a song fu' de day dat  
died,  
De day of long ergo.

### A PLANTATION MELODY

DE trees is bendix' in de sto'm,  
De rain done hid de mountain's  
fo'm,

I's 'lone an' in distress.  
But listen, dah's a voice I hyeah,  
A-sayin' to me, loud an' cleah,  
"Lay low in de wildaness."

De lightnin' flash, de bough sway  
low,  
My po' sick hea't is trimblin' so,  
It hu'ts my very breas'.  
But him dat give de lightnin'  
powah

Jes' bids me in de tryin' howah  
"Lay low in de wildaness."

O brothah, w'en de tempes' beat,  
An' w'en yo' weary head an' feet  
Can't fin' no place to res',  
Jes' 'membah dat de Mastah's  
nigh,  
An' putty soon you 'll hyeah de  
cry,  
"Lay low in de wildaness."

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

O sistah, w'en de rain come down,  
An' all yo' hopes is 'bout to  
drown,

Don't trus' de Mastah less.  
He smilin' w'en you t'ink he  
frown,  
He ain' gwine let yo' soul sink  
down —

Lay low in de wildaness.

### A SPIRITUAL

DE 'cession 's stahted on de gospel  
way,

De Capting is a-drawin' nigh:  
Bettah stop a-foolin' an' a-try to  
pray;

Lif' up yo' haid w'en de King  
go by!

Oh, sinnah mou'nin' in de dusty  
road,

Hyeah 's de minute fu' to dry  
yo' eye:

Dey 's a mighty One a-comin'  
fu' to baih yo' load;

Lif' up yo' haid w'en de King  
go by!

Oh, widder weepin' by yo' hus-  
ban's grave,

Hit 's bettah fu' to sing den  
sigh:

Hyeah come de Mastah wid de  
powah to save;

Lif' up yo' haid w'en de King  
go by!

Oh, orphans a-weepin' lak de wid-  
der do,

An' I wish you 'd tell me why:  
De Mastah is a mammy an' a  
pappy too;

Lif' up yo' haid w'en de King  
go by!

Oh, Moses sot de sarpint in de  
wildahness

W'en de chillun had com-  
menced to die:

Some 'efused to look, but hit  
cuohed de res';

Lif' up yo' haid w'en de King  
go by!

Bow down, bow 'way down,

Bow down,

But lif' up yo' haid w'en de King  
go by!

### THE MEMORY OF MARTHA

OUT in de night a sad bird moans,  
An', oh, but hit 's mighty  
lonely;

Times I kin sing, but mos' I  
groans,

Fu' oh, but hit 's mighty  
lonely!

Is you sleepin' well dis evenin',  
Marfy, deah?

W'en I calls you f'om de cabin,  
kin you hyeah?

'T ain't de same ol' place to me,  
Nuffin' 's lak hit used to be,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

W'en I knowed dat you was allus  
some'ers near.

Down by de road de shadders  
grows,

An', oh, but hit's mighty  
lonely;

Seem lak de ve'y moonlight  
knows,

An', oh, but hit's mighty  
lonely!

Does you know, I's cryin' fu' you,  
oh, my wife?

Does you know dey ain't no joy  
no mo' in life?

An' my only t'ought is dis,  
Dat I's honin' fu' de bliss

Fu' to quit dis groun' o' worri-  
ment an' strife.

Oah on de baid my banjo lays,

An', oh, but hit's mighty  
lonely;

Can't even sta't a chune o' praise,  
An', oh, but hit's mighty

lonely!

Oh, hit's mighty slow a-waitin'  
hyeah below.

Is you watchin' fu' me, Marfy,  
at de do'?

Ef you is, in spite o' sin,

Dey'll be sho' to let me in,

W'en dey sees yo' face a-shinin',  
den dey'll know.

## W'EN I GITS HOME

It's mighty tiahsome layin'  
'roun'

Dis sorrer-laden earfly groun',

An' oftentimes I thinks, thinks  
I,

'T would be a sweet t'ing des to  
die,

An' go 'long home.

Home whaih de frien's I loved'll  
say,

"We've waited fu' you many a  
day,

Come hyeah an' res' yo'se'f, an'  
know

You's done wid sorrer an' wid  
woe,

Now you's at home."

W'en I gits home some blessid  
day,

I 'lows to th'ow my caihs erway,

An' up an' down de shinin' street,

Go singin' sof' an' low an' sweet,

W'en I gits home.

I wish de day was neah at han',

I's tiahed of dis grievin' lan',

I's tiahed of de lonely yeahs.

I want to des dry up my teahs,

An' go 'long home.

Oh, Mastah, won't you sen' de  
call?

My frien's is daih, my hope, my  
aïl.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

I 's waitin' whaih de road is rough,  
I want to hyeah you say,  
"Enough,  
Ol' man, come home!"

"HOWDY, HONEY,  
HOWDY!"

Do' a-stan'in' on a jar, fiah  
a-shinin' thoo,  
Ol' folks drowsin' 'roun' de place,  
wide awake is Lou,  
W'en I tap, she answeh, an' I see  
huh 'mence to grin,  
"Howdy, honey, howdy, won't  
you step right in?"

Den I step erpon de log layin' at  
de do',  
Bless de Lawd, huh mammy an'  
huh pap's done 'menced to  
sno',  
Now's de time, ef evah, ef I's  
gwine to try an' win,  
"Howdy, honey, howdy, won't  
you step right in?"

No use playin' on de aidge,  
trimblin' on de brink,  
W'en a body love a gal, tell huh  
whut he t'ink;  
W'en huh hea't is open fu' de love  
you gwine to gin,  
Pull yo'se'f togethah, suh, an' step  
right in.

Sweetes' imbitation dat a body  
evah hyeahed,

Sweetah den de music of a love-  
sick mockin'-bird,  
Comin' f'om de gal you loves bet-  
tah den yo' kin,  
"Howdy, honey, howdy, won't  
you step right in?"

At de gate o' heaven w'en de  
storm o' life is pas',  
'Spec' I'll be a-stan'in', 'twell de  
Mastah say at las',  
"Hyeah he stan' all weary, but  
he wonned his fight wid sin.  
Howdy, honey, howdy, won't you  
step right in?"

## THE UNSUNG HEROES

A SONG for the unsung heroes  
who rose in the country's  
need,  
When the life of the land was  
threatened by the slaver's  
cruel greed,  
For the men who came from the  
cornfield, who came from the  
plough and the flail,  
Who rallied round when they  
heard the sound of the  
mighty man of the rail.  
They laid them down in the val-  
leys, they laid them down in  
the wood,  
And the world looked on at the  
work they did, and whis-  
pered, "It is good."

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

They fought their way on the  
hillside, they fought their  
way in the glen,

And God looked down on their  
sinews brown, and said, "I  
have made them men."

They went to the blue lines gladly,  
and the blue lines took them  
in,

And the men who saw their  
muskets' fire thought not of  
their dusky skin.

The gray lines rose and melted  
beneath their scathing show-  
ers,

And they said, "'T is true, they  
have force to do, these old  
slave boys of ours."

Ah, Wagner saw their glory, and  
Pillow knew their blood,

That poured on a nation's altar,  
a sacrificial flood.

Port Hudson heard their war-cry  
that smote its smoke-filled  
air,

And the old free fires of their  
savage sires again were  
kindled there.

They laid them down where the  
rivers the greening valleys  
gem.

And the song of the thund'rous  
cannon was their sole re-  
quiem,

And the great smoke wreath that  
mingled its hue with the  
dusky cloud,

Was the flag that furled o'er a  
saddened world, and the  
sheet that made their shroud.

Oh, Mighty God of the Battles  
Who held them in Thy  
hand,

Who gave them strength through  
the whole day's length, to  
fight for their native land,

They are lying dead on the hill-  
sides, they are lying dead on  
the plain,

And we have not fire to smite the  
lyre and sing them one brief  
strain.

Give, Thou, some seer the power  
to sing them in their might,

The men who feared the master's  
whip, but did not fear the  
fight;

That he may tell of their virtues  
as minstrels did of old,

Till the pride of face and the hate  
of race grow obsolete and  
cold.

A song for the unsung heroes who  
stood the awful test,

When the humblest host that the  
land could boast went forth  
to meet the best;

A song for the unsung heroes who  
fell on the bloody sod,

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Who fought their way from night  
to day and struggled up to  
God.

### THE POOL

By the pool that I see in my  
dreams, dear love,

I have sat with you time and  
again;

And listened beneath the dank  
leaves, dear love,

To the sibilant sound of the  
rain.

And the pool, it is silvery bright,  
dear love,

And as pure as the heart of a  
maid,

As sparkling and dimpling, it  
darkles and shines

In the depths of the heart of  
the glade.

But, oh, I've a wish in my soul,  
dear love,

(The wish of a dreamer, it  
seems,)

That I might wash free of my  
sins, dear love,

In the pool that I see in my  
dreams.

### POSSESSION

Whose little lady is you, chile,  
Whose little gal is you?

What's de use o' kiver'n up yo'  
face?

Chile, dat ain't de way to do  
Lemme see yo' little eyes,

Tek yo' little han's down nice,  
Lawd, you wuff a million bills,

Huh uh, chile, dat ain't yo'  
price.

Honey, de money ain't been made

Dat dey could pay fu' you;

'Tain't no use a-biddin'; you too  
high

Fu' de riches' Jap er Jew.

Lemme see you smilin' now,

How dem teef o' yo'n do  
shine,

An' de t'ing dat meks me laff

Is dat all o' you is mine.

How's I gwine to tell you how I  
feel,

How's I gwine to weigh yo'  
wuff?

Oh, you sholy is de sweetes' t'ing  
Walkin' on dis blessed earf.

Possum is de sweetes' meat,

Cidah is the nices' drink,

But my little lady-bird

Is de bes' of all, I t'ink.

Talk erbout 'uligion he'pin' folks

All thoo de way o' life,

Gin de res' 'uligion, des' gin me

You, my little lady-wife.

Den de days kin come all ha'd,

Den de nights kin come all  
black,



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Des' you tek me by de han',  
An' I 'll stumble on de track.

Stumble on de way to Gawd, my  
chile,

Stumble on, an' mebbe fall;

But I 'll keep a-trottin', while you  
lead on,

Pickin' an' a-trottin', dat's all.

Hol' me mighty tight, dough,  
chile,

Fu' hit's rough an' rocky lan',

Heaben's at de en', I know,

So I's leanin' on yo' han'.

### THE OLD FRONT GATE

W'EN daih's chillun in de house,

Dey keep on a-gittin' tall;

But de folks don' seem to see

Dat dey's growin' up at all,

'Twell dey fin' out some fine day

Dat de gals has 'menced to  
grow,

W'en dey notice as dey pass

Dat de front gate's saggin' low.

W'en de hinges creak an' cry,

An' de bahs go slantin' down,

You kin reckon dat hit's time

Fu' to cas' yo' eye erroun',

'Cause daih ain't no 'sputin' dis,

Hit's de trues' sign to show

Dat daih's cou'tin' goin' on

W'en de ol' front gate sags low.

Oh, you grumble an' complain,

An' you prop dat gate up right;

But you notice right nex' day

Dat hit's in de same ol' plight.

So you fin' dat hit's a rule,

An' daih ain' no use to blow,

W'en de gals is growin' up,

Dat de front gate will sag low.

Den you t'ink o' yo' young days,

W'en you cou'ted Sally Jane,

An' you so't o' feel ashamed

Fu' to grumble an' complain,

'Cause yo' ricerlection says,

An' you know hits wo'ds is so,

Dat huh pappy had a time

Wid his front gate saggin' low.

So you jes' looks on an' smiles

At 'em leanin' on de gate,

Tryin' to t'ink whut he kin say

Fu' to keep him daih so late,

But you lets dat gate erlone,

Fu' yo' 'sperunce goes to show,

'Twell de gals is ma'ied off,

It gwine keep on saggin' low.

### DIRGE FOR A SOLDIER

IN the east the morning comes,

Hear the rollin' of the drums

On the hill.

But the heart that beat as they  
beat

In the battle's raging day heat

Lieth still.

Unto him the night has come,

Though they roll the morning  
drum.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

What is in the bugle's blast?

It is: "Victory at last!

Now for rest."

But, my comrades, come behold  
him,

Where our colors now enfold him,  
And his breast

Bares no more to meet the blade,  
But lies covered in the shade.

What a stir there is to-day!

They are laying him away

Where he fell.

There the flag goes draped before  
him;

Now they pile the grave sod o'er  
him

With a knell.

And he answers to his name

In the higher ranks of fame.

There's a woman left to mourn

For the child that she has borne

In travail.

But her heart beats high and  
higher,

With the patriot mother's fire,

At the tale.

She has borne and lost a son,

But her work and his are done.

Fling the flag out, let it wave;

They're returning from the  
grave—

"Double quick!"

And the cymbals now are crash-  
ing,

Bright his comrades' eyes are flash-  
ing

From the thick

Battle-ranks which knew him  
brave,

No tears for a hero's grave.

In the east the morning comes,

Hear the rattle of the drums

Far away.

Now no time for grief's pursuing,

Other work is for the doing,

Here to-day.

He is sleeping, let him rest

With the flag across his breast.

### A FROLIC

SWING yo' lady roun' an' roun',

Do de bes' you know;

Mek yo' bow an' p'omenade

Up an' down de flo';

Mek dat banjo hump huhse'f,

Listen at huh talk:

Mastah gone to town to-night;

'T ain't no time to walk.

Lif' yo' feet an' flutter thoo,

Run, Miss Lucy, run;

Reckon you'll be cotched an'  
kissed

'Fo' de night is done.

You don't need to be so proud—

I's a-watchin' you,

An' I's layin' lots o' plans

Fu' to git you, too.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Moonlight on de cotton-fiel'  
Shinin' sof' an' white,  
Whippo'will a-tellin' tales  
Out thaih ir de night;  
An' yo' cabin 's 'crost de lot:  
Run, Miss Lucy, run;  
Reckon you 'll be cotched an'  
kissed  
'Fo' de night is done.

### NODDIN' BY DE FIRE

SOME folks t'inks hit 's right an'  
p'opah,  
Soon ez bedtime come erroun',  
Fu' to scramble to de kiver,  
Lak dey 'd hyeahed de trumpet  
soun'.

But dese people dey all misses  
Whut I mos'ly does desiah;  
Dat 's de settin' roun' an' dozin',  
An' a-noddin' by de fiah.

When you 's tiahed out a-hoein',  
Er a-followin' de plough,  
Whut 's de use of des a-fallin'  
On yo' pallet lak a cow?  
W'y, de fun is all in waitin'  
In de face of all de tiah,  
An' a-dozin' and a-drowsin'  
By a good ol' hick'ry fiah.

Oh, you grunts an' groans an'  
mumbles  
Case yo' bones is full o' col',

Dough you feels de joy a-tricklin'  
Roun' de co'nahs of yo' soul.  
An' you 'low anothah minute  
'S sho to git you wa'm an'  
dryah,  
W'en you set up pas' yo' bedtime,  
Case you hates to leave de fiah.

Whut 's de use o' downright  
sleepin'?

You can't feel it while it las',  
An' you git up feelin' sorry  
W'en de time fu' it is pas'.  
Seem to me dat time too precious,  
An' de houahs too short entiah,  
Fu' to sleep, w'en you could spen'  
'em  
Des a-noddin' by de fiah.

### LOVE'S CASTLE

KEY and bar, key and bar,  
Iron bolt and chain!  
And what will you do when the  
King comes  
To enter his domain?

Turn key and lift bar,  
Loose, oh, bolt and chain!  
Open the door and let him in,  
And then lock up again.

But, oh, heart, and woe, heart,  
Why do you ache so sore?  
Never a moment's peace have you  
Since Love hath passed the door.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Turn key and lift bar,  
And loose bolt and chain;  
But Love took in his esquire, Grief,  
And there they both remain.

### MORNING SONG OF LOVE

DARLING, my darling, my heart is  
on the wing,  
It flies to thee this morning like  
a bird,  
Like happy birds in springtime my  
spirits soar and sing,  
The same sweet song thine ears  
have often heard.

The sun is in my window, the  
shadow on the lea,  
The wind is moving in the  
branches green,  
And all my life, my darling, is  
turning unto thee,  
And kneeling at thy feet, my  
own, my queen.

The golden bells are ringing across  
the distant hill,  
Their merry peals come to me  
soft and clear,  
But in my heart's deep chapel all  
incense-filled and still  
A sweeter bell is sounding for  
thee, dear.

The bell of love invites thee to  
come and seek the shrine

Whose altar is erected unto  
thee,  
The offerings, the sacrifice, the  
prayers, the chants are  
thine,  
And I, my love, thy humble  
priest will be.

### ON A CLEAN BOOK

TO F. N.

LIKE sea-washed sand upon the  
shore,  
So fine and clean the tale,  
So clear and bright I almost see,  
The flashing of a sail.

The tang of salt is in its veins,  
The freshness of the spray  
God give you love and lore and  
strength,  
To give us such away.

### TO THE EASTERN SHORE

I's feelin' kin' o' lonesome in my  
little room to-night,  
An' my min's done los' de min-  
utes an' de miles,  
W'hile it teks me back a-flyin' to  
de country of delight,  
Whaih de Chesapeake goes  
grumblin' er wid smiles.  
Oh, de ol' plantation's callin'  
to me, Come, come back,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Hyeah 's de place fu' you to la-  
boun an' to res',

'Fu my sandy roads is gleam-  
in' w'ile de city ways is  
black;

Come back, honey, case yo'  
country home is bes'.

W'ile my little cabin beckons,  
dough his mouf is closed  
an' dumb,

I's a-comin, an' my hea't be-  
gins to sing.

### RELUCTANCE

I know de moon is shinin' down  
erpon de Eastern sho',  
An' de bay's a-sayin' "How-  
dy" to de lan';

An' de folks is all a-settin' out  
erroun' de cabin do',

Wid dey feet a-restin' in de sil-  
vah san';

An' de ol' plantation's callin'  
to me, Come, oh, come,

F'om de life dat's des' a-waih-  
in' you erway,

F'om de trouble an' de bustle,  
an' de agernizin' hum

Dat de city keeps ergoin' all de  
day.

I's tiahed of de city, tek me back  
to Sandy Side,

Whaih de po'est ones kin live  
an' play an' eat;

Whaih we draws a simple livin'  
f'om de fo'est an' de tide,

An' de days ah faih, an' evah  
night is sweet.

Fu' de ol' plantation's callin'  
to me, Come, oh, come.

An' de Chesapeake's a-sayin'  
"Dat's de t'ing,"

WILL I have some mo' dat pie?  
No, ma'am, thank-ee, dat is—  
I—

Bettah quit daihin' me.

Dat ah pie look sutny good:

How'd you feel now ef I would?

I don' reckon dat I should;

Bettah quit daihin' me.

Look hyeah, I gwine tell de truf,  
Mine is sholy one sweet toof:

Bettah quit daihin' me.

Yass'm, yass'm, dat's all right,

I's done tried to be perlite:

But dat pie's a lakly sight,

Wha's de use o' daihin' me?

My, yo' lips is full an' red,

Don't I wish you'd tu'n yo' haid?

Bettah quit daihin' me.

Dat ain't faih, now, honey chile,

I's gwine lose my sense erwhile

Ef you des set daih an' smile,

Bettah quit daihin' me.

Nuffin' don' look ha'f so fine

Ez dem teef, deah, w'en dey shine:

Bettah quit daihin' me.

Now look hyeah, I tells you dis;

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

I'll give up all othah bliss  
Des to have one little kiss,  
Bettah quit daihin' me.

Laws, I teks yo' little han',  
Ain't it tendah? bless de lan'—  
Bettah quit daihin' me.  
I's so lonesome by myse'f,  
'D ain't no fun in livin' lef';  
Dis hyeah life's ez dull ez def:  
Bettah quit daihin' me.

Why n't you tek yo' han' erway?  
Yass, I'll hol' it: but I say  
Bettah quit daihin' me.  
Holin' han's is sholy fine.  
Seems lak dat's de weddin' sign.  
Wish you'd say dat you'd be  
mine;—  
Dah you been daihin' me.

### BALLADE

By Mystic's banks I held my  
dream.  
(I held my fishing rod as well,)  
The vision was of dace and bream,  
A fruitless vision, sooth to tell.  
But round about the sylvan dell  
Were other sweet Arcadian  
shrines,  
Gone now, is all the rural spell,  
Arcadia has trolley lines.  
Oh, once loved, sluggish, darkling  
stream,

For me no more, thy waters  
swell,  
Thy music now the engines'  
scream,  
Thy fragrance now the factory's  
smell;  
Too near for me the clanging  
bell;  
A false light in the water shines  
While Solitude lists to her  
knell,—  
Arcadia has trolley lines.

Thy wooded lanes with shade and  
gleam  
Where bloomed the fragrant as-  
phodel,  
Now bleak commercially teem  
With signs "To Let," "To  
Buy," "To Sell."  
And Commerce holds them  
fierce and fell;  
With vulgar sport she now com-  
bines  
Sweet Nature's piping voice to  
quell.  
Arcadia has trolley lines.

### L'ENVOI.

Oh, awful Power whose works  
repel  
The marvel of the earth's de-  
signs,—  
I'll hie me elsewhere to dwell,  
Arcadia has trolley lines.



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

### SPEAKIN' AT DE COU'T- HOUSE

DEY been speakin' at de cou't-  
house,

An' laws-a-massy me,  
T was de beatness kin' o' doin's  
Dat evah I did see.

Of cose I had to be dah  
In de middle o' de crowd,  
an' I hallohed wid de othahs,  
W'en de speakah riz and bowed.

was kind o' disapp'inted  
At de smallness of de man,  
ase I 'd allus pictered great folks  
On a mo' expansive plan;  
ut I t'ought I could respect him  
An' tek in de wo'ds he said,  
u' dey sho was somp'n knowin'  
In de bald spot on his haid.

ut hit did seem so't o' funny  
Aftah waitin' fu' a week  
at de people kep' on shoutin'  
So de man des could n't speak;  
te ho'ns dey blared a little,  
Den dey let loose on de  
drums,—

ome one tol' me dey was playin'  
"See de conkerin' hero comes."

Well," says I, "you all is white  
folks,

But you 's sutny actin' queer,  
That 's de use of heroes comin'  
Ef dey cain't talk w'en dey 's  
here?"

Aftah while dey let him open,  
An' dat man he waded in,  
An' he fit de wahs all ovah  
Winnin' victeries lak sin.

W'en he come down to de present,  
Den he made de feathahs fly.  
He des waded in on money,  
An' he played de ta'iff high.  
An' he said de colah question,  
Hit was ovah, solved, an' done,  
Dat de dahky was his brothah,  
Evah blessed mothah's son.

Well he settled all de trouble  
Dat 's been pesterin' de lan',  
Den he set down mid de cheerin'  
An' de playin' of de ban'.  
I was feelin' moughty happy  
'Twell I hyeahed somebody  
speak,  
"Well, dat 's his side of de bus'-  
ness,  
But you wait for Jones nex'  
week."

### BLACK SAMSON OF BRANDYWINE

"In the fight at Brandywine, Black  
Samson, a giant negro armed with a  
scythe, sweeps his way through the  
red ranks. . . ." C. M. SKINNER'S  
*Myths and Legends of Our Own  
Land.*"

GRAY are the pages of record,  
Dim are the volumes of eld;  
Else had old Delaware told us  
More that her history held.



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Told us with pride in the story,  
Honest and noble and fine,  
More of the tale of my hero,  
Black Samson of Brandywine.

Sing of your chiefs and your nobles,

Saxon and Celt and Gaul,  
Breath of mine ever shall join you,  
Highly I honor them all.

Give to them all of their glory,  
But for this noble of mine,  
Lend him a tithe of your tribute,  
Black Samson of Brandywine.

There in the heat of the battle,  
There in the stir of the fight,  
Loomed he, an ebony giant,  
Black as the pinions of night.  
Swinging his scythe like a mower  
Over a field of grain,  
Needless the care of the gleaners,  
Where he had passed amain.

Straight through the human harvest,

Cutting a bloody swath,  
Woe to you, soldier of Briton!  
Death is abroad in his path.  
Flee from the scythe of the reaper,  
Flee while the moment is thine,  
None may with safety withstand him,  
Black Samson of Brandywine.

Was he a freeman or bondman?  
Was he a man or a thing?

What does it matter? His bravery

Renders him royal — a king.  
If he was only a chattel,  
Honor the ransom may pay  
Of the royal, the loyal black giant  
Who fought for his country  
that day.

Noble and bright is the story,  
Worthy the touch of the lyre,  
Sculptor or poet should find it  
Full of the stuff to inspire.  
Beat it in brass and in copper,  
Tell it in storied line,  
So that the world may remember  
Black Samson of Brandywine.

### THE LOOKING-GLASS

DINAH stan' befo' de glass,  
Lookin' mighty neat,  
An' huh purty shadder sass  
At huh haid an' feet.  
While she sasshay 'roun' an' bow  
Smilin' den an' poutin' now,  
An' de lookin'-glass, I 'low  
Say: "Now, ain't she sweet?"

All she do, de glass it see,  
Hit des see, no mo',  
Seems to me, hit ought to be  
Drappin' on de flo'.  
She go w'en huh time git slack,  
Kissin' han's an' smilin' back,  
Lawsy, how my lips go smack,  
Watchin' at de do'

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Wisht I was huh lookin'-glass,  
W'en she kissed huh han';  
Does you t'ink I 'd let it pass,  
Settin' on de stan'?  
No; I'd des' fall down an' break,  
Kin' o' glad 't uz fu' huh sake;  
But de diffunce, dat whut make  
Lookin'-glass an' man.

### A MISTY DAY

HEART of my heart, the day is  
chill,  
The mist hangs low o'er the  
wooded hill,  
The soft white mist and the heavy  
cloud  
The sun and the face of heaven  
shroud.  
The birds are thick in the dripping  
trees,  
That drop their pearls to the beg-  
gar breeze;  
No songs are rife where songs are  
wont,  
Each singer crouches in his haunt.  
Heart of my heart, the day is chill,  
Whene'er thy loving voice is still,  
The cloud and mist hide the sky  
from me,  
Whene'er thy face I cannot see.  
My thoughts fly back from the  
chill without,  
My mind in the storm drops  
doubt on doubt,

No songs arise. Without thee,  
love,  
My soul sinks down like a fright-  
ened dove.

### LI'L' GAL

OH, de weathah it is balmy an' de  
breeze is sighin' low.

Li'l' gal,

An' de mockin' bird is singin' in  
de locus' by de do',

Li'l' gal;

Dere's a hummin' an' a bummin'  
in de lan' f'om eas' to wes',

I's a-sighin' fu' you, honey, an' I  
nevah know no res'.

Fu' dey's lots o' trouble brewin'  
an' a-stewin' in my breas',

Li'l' gal.

Whut's de mattah wid de weathah,  
whut's de mattah wid de  
breeze,

Li'l' gal?

Whut's de mattah wid de locus'  
dat's a-singin' in de trees,

Li'l' gal?

W'y dey knows dey ladies love 'em,  
an' dey knows dey love 'em  
true,

An' dey love 'em back, I reckon,  
des' lak I's a-lovin' you;

Dat's de reason dey's a-weavin'  
an' a-sighin', thoo an' thoo,

Li'l' gal.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Don't you let no da'ky fool you  
'cause de clo'es he waihs is  
fine,

Li'l' gal.

Dey's a hones' hea't a-beatin' un-  
nerneaf dese rags o' mine,

Li'l' gal.

C'ose dey ain' no use in mockin'  
whut de birds an' weathah do,

But I's so'y I cain't 'spress it w'en  
I knows I loves you true,

Dat's de reason I's a-sighin' an'  
a-singin now fu' you,

Li'l' gal.

### DOUGLASS

AH, Douglass, we have fall'n on  
evil days,

Such days as thou, not even thou  
didst know,

When thee, the eyes of that  
harsh long ago

Saw, salient, at the cross of devious  
ways,

And all the country heard thee  
with amaze.

Not ended then, the passionate  
ebb and flow,

The awful tide that battled to  
and fro;

We ride amid a tempest of dis-  
praise.

Now, when the waves of swift dis-  
sension swarm,

And Honor, the strong pilot,  
lieth stark,

Oh, for thy voice high-sounding  
o'er the storm,

For thy strong arm to guide the  
shivering bark,

The blast-defying power of thy  
form,

To give us comfort through the  
lonely dark.

### WHEN SAM'L SINGS

HYEAH dat singin' in de medders

Whaih de folks is mekin' hay?

Wo'k is pretty middlin' heavy

Fu' a man to be so gay.

You kin tell dey's somep'n special

F'om de canter o' de song;

Somep'n sholy pleasin' Sam'l,

W'en he singin' all day long.

Hyeahd him wa'blin' 'way dis  
mo'nin'

'Fo' 't was light enough to see.

Seem lak music in de evenin'

Allus good enough fu' me.

But dat man commenced to hollah

'Fo' he 'd even washed his face;

Would you b'lieve, de scan'lous  
rascal

Woke de birds erroun' de place?

Sam'l took a trip a-Sad'day;

Dressed hisse'f in all he had,

Tuk a cane an' went a-strollin',

Lookin' mighty pleased an' glad.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Some folks don' know whut de  
mattah,

But I do, you bet yo' life;  
Sam'l smilin' an' a-singin'  
'Case he been to see his wife.

She live on de fu' plantation,  
Twenty miles erway er so;  
But huh man is mighty happy  
W'en he git de chanst to go.  
Walkin' allus ain' de nices'—  
Mo'nin' fin's him on de way—  
But he allus comes back smilin',  
Lak his pleasure was his pay.

Den he do a heap o' talkin',  
Do' he mos'ly kin' o' still,  
But de wo'ds, dey gits to runnin'  
Lak de watah fu' a mill.  
Whut 's de use o' havin' trouble,  
Whut 's de use o' havin' strife?"  
Dat 's de way dis Sam'l preaches  
W'en he been to see his wife.

An' I reckon I git jealous,  
Fu' I laff an' joke an' sco'n,  
An' I say, "Oh, go on, Sam'l,  
Des go on, an' blow yo' ho'n."  
But I know dis comin' Sad'day,  
Dey 'll be brighter days in life;  
An' I 'll be ez glad ez Sam'l  
W'en I go to see my wife.

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

THE word is writ that he who  
runs may read.

What is the passing breath of  
earthly fame?

But to snatch glory from the hands  
of blame—

That is to be, to live, to strive in-  
deed.

A poor Virginia cabin gave the  
seed,

And from its dark and lowly door  
there came

A peer of princes in the world's  
acclaim,

A master spirit for the nation's  
need.

Strong, silent, purposeful beyond  
his kind,

The mark of rugged force on  
brow and lip,

Straight on he goes, nor turns to  
look behind

Where hot the hounds come  
baying at his hip;

With one idea foremost in his  
mind,

Like the keen prow of some on-  
forging ship.

### THE MONK'S WALK

IN this sombre garden close  
What has come and passed, who  
knows?

What red passion, what white  
pain

Haunted this dim walk in vain?

Underneath the ivied wall,  
Where the silent shadows fall,

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Lies the pathway chill and damp  
Where the world-quit dreamers  
tramp.

Just across, where sunlight burns,  
Smiling at the mourning ferns,  
Stand the roses, side by side,  
Nodding in their useless pride.

Ferns and roses, who shall say  
What you witness day by day?  
Covert smile or dropping eye,  
As the monks go pacing by.

Has the novice come to-day  
Here beneath the wall to pray?  
Has the young monk, lately chid-  
den,  
Sung his lyric, sweet, forbidden?

Tell me, roses, did you note  
That pale father's throbbing  
throat?  
Did you hear him murmur,  
"Love!"  
As he kissed a faded glove?

Mourning ferns, pray tell me why  
Shook you with that passing sigh?  
Is it that you chanced to spy  
Something in the Abbot's eye?

Here no dream, nor thought of sin,  
Where no worlding enters in;  
Here no longing, no desire,  
Heat nor flame of earthly fire.

Branches waving green above,  
Whisper naught of life nor love;

Softened winds that seem a breath,  
Perfumed, bring no fear of death.

Is it living thus to live?  
Has life nothing more to give?  
Ah, no more of smile or sigh —  
Life, the world, and love, good-  
bye.

Gray, and passionless, and dim,  
Echoing of the solemn hymn,  
Lies the walk, 'twixt fern and rose,  
Here within the garden close.

### LOVE-SONG

If Death should claim me for her  
own to-day,  
And softly I should falter from  
your side,  
Oh, tell me, loved one, would my  
memory stay,  
And would my image in your  
heart abide?  
Or should I be as some forgotten  
dream,  
That lives its little space, then  
fades entire?  
Should Time send o'er you its  
relentless stream,  
To cool your heart, and quench  
for aye love's fire?

I would not for the world, love,  
give you pain,  
Or ever compass what would  
cause you grief;

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

And, oh, how well I know that  
tears are vain!

But love is sweet, my dear, and  
life is brief;

So if some day before you I should  
go

Beyond the sound and sight of  
song and sea,

'T would give my spirit stronger  
wings to know

That you remembered still and  
wept for me.

### SLOW THROUGH THE DARK

SLOW moves the pageant of a  
climbing race;

Their footsteps drag far, far be-  
low the height,

And, unprevailing by their ut-  
most might,

Seem faltering downward from  
each hard won place.

No strange, swift-sprung excep-  
tion we; we trace

A devious way thro' dim, uncer-  
tain light,—

Our hope, through the long  
vistaed years, a sight

Of that our Captain's soul sees  
face to face.

Who, faithless, faltering that  
the road is steep,

Now raiseth up his drear insistent  
cry?

Who stoppeth here to spend a  
while in sleep

Or curseth that the storm obscures  
the sky?

Heed not the darkness round  
you, dull and deep;

The clouds grow thickest when  
the summit's nigh.

### THE MURDERED LOVER

SAY a mass for my soul's repose,  
my brother,

Say a mass for my soul's repose,  
I need it,

Lovingly lived we, the sons of one  
mother,

Mine was the sin, but I pray  
you not heed it.

Dark were her eyes as the sloe and  
they called me,

Called me with voice indepen-  
dent of breath.

God! how my heart beat; her  
beauty appalled me,

Dazed me, and drew to the sea-  
brink of death.

Lithe was her form like a willow.  
She beckoned,

What could I do save to follow  
and follow,

Nothing of right or result could be  
reckoned;

Life without her was unworthy  
and hollow.



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Ay, but I wronged thee, my  
brother, my brother;

Ah, but I loved her, thy beautiful  
wife.

Shade of our father, and soul of  
our mother,

Have I not paid for my love  
with my life?

Dark was the night when, re-  
vengeful, I met you,  
Deep in the heart of a desolate  
land.

Warm was the life-blood which  
angrily wet you

Sharp was the knife that I felt  
from your hand.

Wept you, oh, wept you, alone by  
the river,

When my stark carcass you  
secretly sank.

Ha, now I see that you tremble  
and shiver;

'T was but my spirit that passed  
when you shrank!

Weep not, oh, weep not, 't is over,  
't is over;

Stir the dark weeds with the  
turn of the tide;

Go, thou hast sent me forth, ever  
a rover,

Rest and the sweet realm of  
heaven denied.

Say a mass for my soul's repose,  
my brother,

Say a mass for my soul, I need  
it.

Sin of mine was it, and sin of no  
other,

Mine was it all, but I pray you  
not heed it.

### PHILOSOPHY

I BEEN t'inkin' 'bout de preachah;  
whut he said de othah  
night,

'Bout hit bein' people's dooty,  
fu' to keep dey faces bright;

How one ought to live so pleasant  
dat ouah tempah never riles,

Meetin' evahbody roun' us wid  
ouah very nicest smiles.

Dat's all right, I ain't a-sputin'  
not a t'ing dat soun's lak  
fac',

But you don't ketch folks a-grin-  
nin' wid a misery in de  
back;

An' you don't fin' dem a-smilin'  
w'en dey's hongry ez kin  
be,

Leastways, dat's how human  
natur' allus seems to 'pear  
to me.

We is mos' all putty likely fu' to  
have our little cares,

An' I think we'se doin' fus' rate  
w'en we jes' go long and  
bears,



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Widout breakin' up ouah faces in  
a sickly so't o' grin,  
W'en we knows dat in ouah in-  
nards we is p'intly mad ez  
sin.

Oh dey's times fu' bein' pleasant  
an' fu' goin' smilin' roun',  
'Cause I don't believe in people  
allus totin' roun' a frown,  
But it's easy 'nough to titter w'en  
de stew is smokin' hot,  
But hit's mighty ha'd to giggle  
w'en dey's nuffin' in de  
pot.

### A PREFERENCE

MASTAH drink his ol' Made'a,  
Missy drink huh sherry wine,  
Ovahseah lak his whiskey,  
But dat othah drink is mine,  
Des' 'lasses an' watah, 'lasses  
an' watah.

W'en you git 'a steamin' hoe-cake  
On de table, go way, man!  
'D ain but one t'ing to go wid it,  
'Sides de gravy in de pan,  
Dat's 'lasses an' watah, 'lasses  
an' watah.

W'en hit's 'possum dat you eatin',  
'Simmon beer is moughty sweet;  
But fu' evahday consumin'

'D ain't no mo'tal way to beat  
Des' 'lasses an' watah, 'lasses  
an' watah.

W'y de bees is allus busy,  
An' ain' got no time to was'?  
Hit's beca'se dey knows de honey  
Dey's a makin', gwine to tas'  
Lak 'lasses an' watah, 'lasses  
an' watah.

Oh, hit's moughty mil' an'  
soothin',  
An' hit don' go to yo' haid;  
Dat's de reason I's a-backin'  
Up de othah wo'ds I said,  
"Des 'lasses an' watah, 'lasses  
an' watah."

### THE DEBT

THIS is the debt I pay  
Just for one riotous day,  
Years of regret and grief,  
Sorrow without relief.

Pay it I will to the end —  
Until the grave, my friend,  
Gives me a true release —  
Gives me the clasp of peace.

Slight was the thing I bought,  
Small was the debt I thought,  
Poor was the loan at best —  
God! but the interest!

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

### ON THE DEDICATION OF DOROTHY HALL

TUSKEGEE, ALA., APRIL 22, 1901.

Not to the midnight of the gloomy  
past,  
Do we revert to-day; we look  
upon  
The golden present and the future  
vast  
Whose vistas show us visions of  
the dawn.

Nor shall the sorrows of departed  
years  
The sweetness of our tranquil  
souls annoy,  
The sunshine of our hopes dispels  
the tears,  
And clears our eyes to see this  
later joy.

Not ever in the years that God  
hath given  
Have we gone friendless down  
the thorny way,  
Always the clouds of pregnant  
black were riven  
By flashes from His own eternal  
day.

The women of a race should be its  
pride;  
We glory in the strength our  
mothers had,  
We glory that this strength was  
not denied

To labor bravely, nobly, and be  
glad.

God give to these within this tem-  
ple here,  
Clear vision of the dignity of  
toil,  
That virtue in them may its blos-  
soms rear  
Unspotted, fragrant, from the  
lowly soil.

God bless the givers for their noble  
deed,  
Shine on them with the mercy  
of Thy face,  
Who come with open hearts to  
help and speed  
The striving women of a strug-  
gling race.

### A ROADWAY

LET those who will stride on their  
barren roads  
And prick themselves to haste with  
self-made goads,  
Unheeding, as they struggle day  
by day,  
If flowers be sweet or skies be blue  
or gray:  
For me, the lone, cool way by purl-  
ing brooks,  
The solemn quiet of the woodland  
nooks,  
A song-bird somewhere trilling  
sadly gay,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

A pause to pick a flower beside the  
way.

### BY RUGGED WAYS

By rugged ways and thro' the  
night  
We struggle blindly toward the  
light;  
And groping, stumbling, ever pray  
For sight of long delaying day.  
The cruel thorns beside the road  
Stretch eager points our steps to  
goad,  
And from the thickets all about  
Detaining hands reach threatening  
out.

"Deliver us, oh, Lord," we cry,  
Our hands uplifted to the sky.  
No answer save the thunder's peal,  
And onward, onward, still we reel.  
"Oh, give us now thy guiding  
light;"  
Our sole reply, the lightning's  
blight.  
"Vain, vain," cries one, "in vain  
we call;"  
But faith serene is over all.

Beside our way the streams are  
dried,  
And famine mates us side by side.  
Discouraged and reproachful eyes  
Seek once again the frowning skies.  
Yet shall there come, spite storm  
and shock,  
A Moses who shall smite the rock,

Call manna from the Giver's hand,  
And lead us to the promised land!

The way is dark and cold and  
steep,  
And shapes of horror murder sleep,  
And hard the unrelenting years;  
But 'twixt our sighs and moans  
and tears,  
We still can smile, we still can  
sing,  
Despite the arduous journeying.  
For faith and hope their courage  
lend,  
And rest and light are at the end.

### LOVE'S SEASONS

WHEN the bees are humming in  
the honeysuckle vine  
And the summer days are in  
their bloom,  
Then my love is deepest, oh,  
dearest heart of mine,  
When the bees are humming in the  
honeysuckle vine.

When the winds are moaning o'er  
the meadows chill and gray,  
And the land is dim with winter  
gloom,  
Then for thee, my darling, love  
will have its way,  
When the winds are moaning o'er  
the meadows chill and gray.

In the vernal dawning with the  
starting of the leaf,

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

In the merry-chanting time of  
spring,  
Love steals all my senses, oh, the  
happy-hearted thief!  
In the vernal morning with the  
starting of the leaf.

Always, ever always, even in the  
autumn drear,  
When the days are sighing out  
their grief,  
Thou art still my darling, dear-  
est of the dear,  
Always, ever always, even in the  
autumn drear.

### TO A DEAD FRIEND

It is as if a silver chord  
Were suddenly grown mute,  
And life's song with its rhythm  
warred  
Against a silver lute.

It is as if a silence fell  
Where bides the garnered sheaf,  
And voices murmuring, "It is  
well,"  
Are stifled by our grief.

It is as if the gloom of night  
Had hid a summer's day,  
And willows, sighing at their  
plight,  
Bent low beside the way.

For he was part of all the best  
That Nature loves and gives,

And ever more on Memory's breast  
He lies and laughs and lives.

### TO THE SOUTH

ON ITS NEW SLAVERY

HEART of the Southland, heed nie  
pleading now,  
Who bearest, unashamed, upon  
my brow  
The long kiss of the loving tropic  
sun,  
And yet, whose veins with thy red  
current run.

Borne on the bitter winds from  
every hand,  
Strange tales are flying over all the  
land,  
And Condemnation, with his pin-  
ions foul,  
Glooms in the place where broods  
the midnight owl.

What art thou, that the world  
should point at thee,  
And vaunt and chide the weakness  
that they see?  
There was a time they were not  
wont to chide;  
Where is thy old, uncompromis-  
ing pride?

Blood-washed, thou shouldst lift  
up thine honored head,  
White with the sorrow for thy  
loyal dead

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Who lie on every plain, on every  
hill,

And whose high spirit walks the  
Southland still:

Whose infancy our mother's hands  
have nursed.

Thy manhood, gone to battle un-  
accursed,

Our fathers left to till th' re-  
luctant field,

To rape the soil for what she  
would not yield;

Wooing for aye, the cold unam'-  
rous sod,

Whose growth for them still  
meant a master's rod;

Tearing her bosom for the wealth  
that gave

The strength that made the toiler  
still a slave.

Too long we hear the deep im-  
passioned cry

That echoes vainly to the heedless  
sky;

Too long, too long, the Mace-  
donian call

Falls fainting far beyond the out-  
ward wall,

Within whose sweep, beneath the  
shadowing trees,

A slumbering nation takes its  
dangerous ease;

Too long the rumors of thy hatred  
go

For those who loved thee and thy  
children so.

Thou must arise forthwith, and  
strong, thou must

Throw off the smirching of this  
baser dust,

Lay by the practice of this later  
creed,

And be thine honest self again  
indeed.

There was a time when even slav-  
ery's chain

Held in some joys to alternate  
with pain,

Some little light to give the night  
relief,

Some little smiles to take the place  
of grief.

There was a time when, jocund  
as the day,

The toiler hoed his row and sung  
his lay,

Found something gleeful in the  
very air,

And solace for his toiling every-  
where.

Now all is changed, within the  
rude stockade,

A bondsman whom the greed of  
men has made

Almost too brutish to deplore his  
plight,

Toils hopeless on from joyless  
morn till night.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

For him no more the cabin's quiet  
rest,

The homely joys that gave to labor  
zest;

No more for him the merry banjo's  
sound,

Nor trip of lightsome dances foot-  
ing round.

For him no more the lamp shall  
glow at eve,

Nor chubby children pluck him by  
the sleeve;

No more for him the master's eyes  
be bright,—

He has nor freedom's nor a slave's  
delight.

What, was it all for naught, those  
awful years

That drenched a groaning land  
with blood and tears?

Was it to leave this sly convenient  
hell,

That brother fighting his own  
brother fell?

When that great struggle held the  
world in awe,

And all the nations blanched at  
what they saw,

Did Sanctioned Slavery bow its  
conquered head

That this unsanctioned crime  
might rise instead?

Is it for this we all have felt the  
flame,—

This newer bondage and this  
deeper shame?

Nay, not for this, a nation's heroes  
bled,

And North and South with tears  
beheld their dead.

Oh, Mother South, hast thou for-  
got thy ways,

Forgot the glory of thine ancient  
days,

Forgot the honor that once made  
thee great,

And stooped to this unhallowèd  
estate?

It cannot last, thou wilt come  
forth in might,

A warrior queen full armored for  
the fight;

And thou wilt take, e'en with thy  
spear in rest,

Thy dusky children to thy saving  
breast.

Till then, no more, no more the  
gladsome song,

Strike only deeper chords, the  
notes of wrong;

Till then, the sigh, the tear, the  
oath, the moan,

Till thou, oh, South, and thine,  
come to thine own.



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

### THE HAUNTED OAK

PRAY why are you so bare, so bare,  
Oh, bough of the old oak-tree;  
And why, when I go through the  
shade you throw,  
Runs a shudder over me?

My leaves were green as the best,  
I trow,  
And sap ran free in my veins,  
But I saw in the moonlight dim  
and weird  
A guiltless victim's pains.

I bent me down to hear his sigh;  
I shook with his gurgling moan,  
And I trembled sore when they  
rode away,  
And left him here alone.

They'd charged him with the old,  
old crime,  
And set him fast in jail:  
Oh, why does the dog howl all  
night long,  
And why does the night wind  
wail?

He prayed his prayer and he swore  
his oath,  
And he raised his hand to the  
sky;  
But the beat of hoofs smote on his  
ear,  
And the steady tread drew nigh.

Who is it rides by night, by night,  
Over the moonlit road?

And what is the spur that keeps  
the pace,  
What is the galling goad?

And now they beat at the prison  
door,

"Ho, keeper, do not stay!  
We are friends of him whom you  
hold within,  
And we fain would take him  
away

"From those who ride fast on our  
heels  
With mind to do him wrong;  
They have no care for his inno-  
cence,  
And the rope they bear is  
long."

They have fooled the jailer with  
lying words,  
They have fooled the man with  
lies;  
The bolts unbar, the locks are  
drawn,  
And the great door open flies.

Now they have taken him from  
the jail,  
And hard and fast they ride,  
And the leader laughs low down  
in his throat,  
As they halt my trunk beside.

Oh, the judge, he wore a mask of  
black,  
And the doctor one of white,



# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

And the minister, with his oldest  
son,  
Was curiously bedight.

Oh, foolish man, why weep you  
now?

'T is but a little space,  
And the time will come when these  
shall dread

The mem'ry of your face.

I feel the rope against my bark,  
And the weight of him in my  
grain,

I feel in the throe of his final woe  
The touch of my own last pain.

And never more shall leaves come  
forth

On a bough that bears the ban;  
I am burned with dread, I am  
dried and dead,

From the curse of a guiltless  
man.

And ever the judge rides by, rides  
by,

And goes to hunt the deer,  
And ever another rides his soul  
In the guise of a mortal fear.

And ever the man he rides me  
hard,

And never a night stays he;  
For I feel his curse as a haunted  
bough,

On the trunk of a haunted tree.

## WELTSCHMERTZ

You ask why I am sad to-day,  
I have no cares, no griefs, you say?  
Ah, yes, 't is true, I have no  
grief —

But — is there not the falling  
leaf?

The bare tree there is mourning  
left

With all of autumn's gray bereft;  
It is not what has happened me,  
Think of the bare, dismantled tree.

The birds go South along the sky,  
I hear their lingering, long good-  
bye.

Who goes reluctant from my  
breast?

And yet — the lone and wind-  
swept nest.

The mourning, pale-flowered  
hearse goes by,

Why does a tear come to my eye?  
Is it the March rain blowing  
wild?

I have no dead, I know no child.

I am no widow by the bier  
Of him I held supremely dear.  
I have not seen the choicest one  
Sink down as sinks the westering  
sun.

Faith unto faith have I beheld,  
For me, few solemn notes have  
swelled;

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Love beckoned me out to the dawn,  
And happily I followed on.

And yet my heart goes out to  
them

Whose sorrow is their diadem;  
The falling leaf, the crying bird,  
The voice to be, all lost, un-  
heard —

Not mine, not mine, and yet too  
much

The thrilling power of human  
touch,

While all the world looks on and  
scorns

I wear another's crown of thorns.

Count me a priest who under-  
stands

The glorious pain of nail-pierced  
hands;

Count me a comrade of the thief  
Hot driven into late belief.

Oh, mother's tear, oh, father's sigh,  
Oh, mourning sweetheart's last  
good-bye,

I yet have known no mourning  
save

Beside some brother's brother's  
grave.

### ROBERT GOULD SHAW

WHY was it that the thunder  
voice of Fate

Should call thee, studious, from  
the classic groves,

Where calm-eyed Pallas with  
still footstep roves,  
And charge thee seek the turmoil  
of the state?

What bade thee hear the voice and  
rise elate,

Leave home and kindred and  
thy spicy loaves,

To lead th' unlettered and de-  
spised droves

To manhood's home and thunder  
at the gate?

Far better the slow blaze of Learn-  
ing's light,

The cool and quiet of her dearer  
fane,

Than this hot terror of a hopeless  
fight,

This cold endurance of the final  
pain,—

Since thou and those who with  
thee died for right

Have died, the Present teaches,  
but in vain!

### ROSES

OH, wind of the spring-time, oh,  
free wind of May,

When blossoms and bird-song  
are rife;

Oh, joy for the season, and joy for  
the day,

That gave me the roses of life,  
of life,

That gave me the roses of life.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Oh, wind of the summer, sing  
loud in the night,  
When flutters my heart like a  
dove;

One came from thy kingdom, thy  
realm of delight,  
And gave me the roses of love,  
of love,  
And gave me the roses of love.

Oh, wind of the winter, sigh low  
in thy grief,  
I hear thy compassionate breath;  
I wither, I fall, like the autumn-  
kissed leaf,  
He gave me the roses of death,  
of death,  
He gave me the roses of death.

### A LOVE SONG

AH, love, my love is like a cry in  
the night,  
A long, loud cry to the empty sky,  
The cry of a man alone in the  
desert,  
With hands uplifted, with parch-  
ing lips,

Oh, rescue me, rescue me,  
Thy form to mine arms,  
The dew of thy lips to my mouth,  
Dost thou hear me?—my call  
thro' the night?

Darling, I hear thee and answer,  
Thy fountain am I,

All of the love of my soul will I  
bring to thee,  
All of the pains of my being shall I  
wring to thee,  
Deep and forever the song of my  
loving shall sing to thee,  
Ever and ever thro' day and thro'  
night shall I cling to thee.  
Hearest thou the answer?  
Darling, I come, I come.

### ITCHING HEELS

Fu' de peace o' my eachin' heels,  
set down;  
Don' fiddle dat chune no mo'.  
Don' you see how dat melody stuhs  
me up  
An' baigs me to tek to de flo'?  
You knows I's a Christian, good  
an' strong;  
I wusship f'om June to June;  
My pra'ahs dey ah loud an' my  
hymns ah long:  
I baig you don' fiddle dat chune.  
I's a crick in my back an' a mis-  
ery hyeah  
Whaih de j'int's's gittin' ol' an'  
stiff,  
But hit seems lak you brings me  
de bref o' my youf;  
W'y, I's suttain I noticed a  
w'iff.  
Don' fiddle dat chune no mo', my  
chile,  
Don' fiddle dat chune no mo';

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

I'll git up an' taih up dis groun'  
fu' a mile,  
An' den I'll be chu'ched fu' it,  
sho'.

Oh, fiddle dat chune some mo', I  
say,

An' fiddle it loud an' fas':

I's a youngstah ergin in de mi'st  
o' my sin;

De p'esent's gone back to de  
pas'.

I'll dance to dat chune, so des fid-  
dle erway;

I knows how de backslidah  
feels;

So fiddle it on 'twell de break o'  
de day

Fu' de sake o' my eachin' heels.

### TO AN INGRATE

THIS is to-day, a golden summer's  
day

And yet — and yet

My vengeful soul will not for-  
get

The past, forever now forgot, you  
say.

From that half height where I had  
sadly climbed,

I stretched my hand,

I lone in all that land,

Down there, where, helpless, you  
were limed.

Our fingers clasped, and dragging  
me a pace,

You struggled up.

It is a bitter Cup,

That now for naught, you turn  
away your face.

I shall remember this for aye and  
aye.

Whate'er may come,

Although my lips are dumb,

My spirit holds you to that yester-  
day.

### IN THE TENTS OF AKBAR

IN the tents of Akbar

Are dole and grief to-day,

For the flower of all the Indies

Has gone the silent way.

In the tents of Akbar

Are emptiness and gloom,

And where the dancers gather,

The silence of the tomb.

Across the yellow desert,

Across the burning sands,

Old Akbar wanders madly,

And wrings his fevered hands.

And ever makes his moaning

To the unanswering sky,

For Sutna, lovely Sutna,

Who was so fair to die.

For Sutna danced at morning,

And Sutna danced at eve;

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Her dusky eyes half hidden  
Behind her silken sleeve.

Her pearly teeth out-glancing  
Between her coral lips,  
The tremulous rhythm of passion  
Marked by her quivering hips.

As lovely as a jewel  
Of fire and dewdrop blent,  
So danced the maiden Sutna  
In gallant Akbar's tent.

And one who saw her dancing,  
Saw her bosom's fall and rise  
Put all his body's yearning  
Into his lovelit eyes.

Then Akbar came and drove  
him —

A jackal — from his door,  
And bade him wander far and look  
On Sutna's face no more.

Some day the sea disgorges;  
The wilderness gives back,  
Those half-dead who have wandered,  
Aimless, across its track.

And he returned — the lover,  
Haggard of brow and spent;  
He found fair Sutna standing  
Before her master's tent.

"Not mine, nor Akbar's, Sutna!"  
He cried and closely pressed,  
And drove his craven dagger  
Straight to the maiden's breast.

Oh, weep, oh, weep, for Sutna,  
So young, so dear, so fair,  
Her face is gray and silent  
Beneath her dusky hair.

And wail, oh, wail, for Akbar,  
Who walks the desert sands,  
Crying aloud for Sutna,  
Wringing his fevered hands.

In the tents of Akbar  
The tears of sorrow run,  
But the corpse of Sutna's slayer,  
Lies rotting in the sun.

### THE FOUNT OF TEARS

ALL hot and grimy from the road,  
Dust gray from arduous years,  
I sat me down and eased my load  
Beside the Fount of Tears.

The waters sparkled to my eye,  
Calm, crystal-like, and cool,  
And breathing there a restful sigh,  
I bent me to the pool.

When, lo! a voice cried: "Pilgrim,  
rise,

Harsh tho' the sentence be,  
And on to other lands and skies —  
This fount is not for thee.

"Pass on, but calm thy needless  
fears,

Some may not love or sin,  
An angel guards the Fount of  
Tears;

All may not bathe therein."

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Then with my burden on my back  
I turned to gaze awhile,  
First at the uninviting track,  
Then at the water's smile.

And so I go upon my way,  
Thro'out the sultry years,  
But pause no more, by night, by  
day,  
Beside the Fount of Tears.

### LIFE'S TRAGEDY

It may be misery not to sing at all  
And to go silent through the  
brimming day.

It may be sorrow never to be  
loved,  
But deeper griefs than these  
beset the way.

To have come near to sing the  
perfect song

And only by a half-tone lost  
the key,

There is the potent sorrow, there  
the grief,

The pale, sad staring of life's  
tragedy.

To have just missed the perfect  
love,

Not the hot passion of untem-  
pered youth,

But that which lays aside its vanity  
And gives thee, for thy trusting  
worship, truth —

This, this it is to be accursed in-  
deed;

For if we mortals love, or if we  
sing,

We count our joys not by the  
things we have,

But by what kept us from the  
perfect thing.

### DE WAY T'INGS COME

De way t'ings come, hit seems to  
me,

Is des' one monst'ous mystery;  
De way hit seem to strike a man,  
Dey ain't no sense, dey ain't no  
plan;

Ef trouble sta'ts a pilin' down,  
It ain't no use to rage er frown,  
It ain't no use to strive er pray,  
Hit's mortal boun' to come dat  
way.

Now, ef you 's hongry, an' yo' plate  
Des' keep on sayin' to you,  
"Wait,"

Don't mek no diffunce how you  
feel,

'T won't do no good to hunt a  
meal,

Fu' dat ah meal des' boun' to hide  
Ontwell de devil's satisfied,

An' 'twell dey's some'p'n by to  
cyave

You 's got to ease yo'se'f an' sta've.

But ef dey's co'n meal on de she't  
You need n't bothah 'roun' yo'se'f,

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Somebody's boun' to amble in  
An' 'vite you to dey co'n meal bin;  
An' ef you's stuffed up to be froat  
Wid co'n er middlin', fowl er  
shoat,

Des' look out an' you'll see fu'  
sho

A 'possum faint befo' yo' do'.

De way t'ings happen, huhuh,  
chile,

Dis worl' 's done puzzled me one  
w'ile;

I's mighty skeered I'll fall in  
doubt,

I des' won't try to reason out  
De reason why folks strive an'  
plan

A dinnah fu' a full-fed man,  
An' shet de do' an' cross de street  
F'om one dat raaly needs to eat.

Shet yo' mouf, you rascal,  
Wha' 's de use to cry?  
You do' see no rain clouds  
Up dah in de sky.

Dis hyeah sweat 's been po'in'  
Down my face sence dawn;  
Ain't hit time we 's hyeahin'  
Dat ah dinnah ho'n?

Go on, Ben an' Jaspah,  
Lif' yo' feet an' fly,  
Hit out fu' de shadder  
Fo' I drap an' die.

Hongry, lawd a' mussy,  
Hongry as a baih,  
Seems lak I hyeah dinnah  
Callin' evahwhaih;  
Daih 's de ho'n a blowin'!  
Let dat cradle swing,  
One mo' sweep, den da'kies,  
Beat me to de spring!

### NOON

SHADDER in de valley  
Sunlight on de hill,  
Sut'ny wish dat locus'  
Knowed how to be still.  
Don't de heat already  
Mek a body hum,  
'Dout dat inseck' sayin'  
Hottah days to come?

Fiel' 's a shinin' yaller  
Wid de bendin' grain,  
Guinea hen a callin',  
Now 's de time fu' rain;

### AT THE TAVERN

A LILT and a swing,  
And a ditty to sing,  
Or ever the night grow old;  
The wine is within,  
And I'm sure 't were a sin  
For a soldier to choose to be cold,  
my dear,  
For a soldier to choose to be cold.

We're right for a spell,  
But the fever is — well,  
No thing to be braved, at least;



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

So bring me the wine;  
No low fever in mine,  
For a drink is more kind than a  
priest, my dear,  
For a drink is more kind than a  
priest.

### DEATH

STORM and strife and stress,  
Lost in a wilderness,  
Groping to find a way,  
Forth to the haunts of day

Sudden a vista peeps,  
Out of the tangled deeps,  
Only a point — the ray  
But at the end is day.

Dark is the dawn and chill,  
Daylight is on the hill,  
Night is the flitting breath,  
Day rides the hills of death.

### NIGHT, DIM NIGHT

Night, dim night, and it rains, my  
love, it rains,  
(Art thou dreaming of me, I  
wonder)

The trees are sad, and the wind  
complains,

Outside the rolling of the thun-  
der,  
And the beat against the panes.

Heart, my heart, thou art mourn-  
ful in the rain,

(Are thy redolent lips a-  
quiver?)

My soul seeks thine, doth it seek  
in vain?

My love goes surging like a  
river,  
Shall its tide bear naught save  
pain?



**LYRICS OF LOVE AND SORROW**



I

LOVE is the light of the world, my  
 dear,  
 Heigho, but the world is  
 gloomy;  
 The light has failed and the lamp  
 down hurled,  
 Leaves only darkness to me.

Love is the light of the world, my  
 dear,  
 Ah me, but the world is dreary;  
 The night is down, and my curtain  
 furled  
 But I cannot sleep, though  
 weary.

Love is the light of the world, my  
 dear,  
 Alas for a hopeless hoping,  
 When the flame went out in the  
 breeze that swirled,  
 And a soul went blindly grop-  
 ing.

II

THE light was on the golden  
 sands,  
 A glimmer on the sea;  
 My soul spoke clearly to thy soul,  
 Thy spirit answered me.

Since then the light that gilds the  
 sands,  
 And glimmers on the sea,

But vainly struggles to reflect  
 The radiant soul of thee.

III

THE sea speaks to me of you  
 All the day long;  
 Still as I sit by its side  
 You are its song.

The sea sings to me of you  
 Loud on the reef;  
 Always it moans as it sings,  
 Voicing my grief.

IV

My dear love died last night;  
 Shall I clothe her in white?  
 My passionate love is dead,  
 Shall I robe her in red?  
 But nay, she was all untrue,  
 She shall not go drest in blue;  
 Still my desolate love was brave,  
 Unrobed let her go to her grave.

V

THERE are brilliant heights of  
 sorrow  
 That only the few may know;  
 And the lesser woes of the world,  
 like waves,  
 Break noiselessly, far below.  
 I hold for my own possessing,  
 A mount that is lone and still —  
 The great high place of a hopeless  
 grief,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

And I call it my "Heart-break  
Hill."

And once on a winter's midnight  
I found its highest crown,  
And there in the gloom, my soul  
and I,  
Weeping, we sat us down.

But now when I seek that summit  
We are two ghosts that go;

Only two shades of a thing that  
died,

Once in the long ago.  
So I sit me down in the silence,  
And say to my soul, "Be still,"  
So the world may not know we  
died that night,  
From weeping on "Heart-break  
Hill."

LYRICS OF SUNSHINE AND SHADOW





## A BOY'S SUMMER SONG

'Tis fine to play  
In the fragrant hay,  
And romp on the golden load;  
To ride old Jack  
To the barn and back,  
Or tramp by a shady road.  
To pause and drink,  
At a mossy brink;  
Ah, that is the best of joy,  
And so I say  
On a summer's day,  
What's so fine as being a boy?  
Ha, Ha!

With line and hook  
By a babbling brook,  
The fisherman's sport we ply;  
And list the song  
Of the feathered throng  
That flit in the branches nigh.  
At last we strip  
For a quiet dip;  
Ah, that is the best of joy.  
For this I say  
On a summer's day,  
What's so fine as being a boy?  
Ha, Ha!

## THE SAND-MAN

I KNOW a man  
With face of tan,  
But who is ever kind;

Whom girls and boys  
Leaves games and toys  
Each eventide to find.

When day grows dim,  
They watch for him,  
He comes to place his claim;  
He wears the crown  
Of Dreaming-town;  
The sand-man is his name.

When sparkling eyes  
Troop sleepywise  
And busy lips grow dumb;  
When little heads  
Nod toward the beds,  
We know the sand-man's come.

## JOHNNY SPEAKS

THE sand-man he's a jolly old  
fellow,  
His face is kind and his voice is  
mellow,  
But he makes your eyelids as heavy  
as lead,  
And then you got to go off to bed;  
I don't think I like the sand-  
man.

But I've been playing this live-  
long day;  
It does make a fellow so tired to  
play!  
Oh, my, I'm a-yawning right here  
before ma,

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

I'm the sleepest fellow that ever  
you saw.  
I think I do like the sand-man.

### WINTER-SONG

OH, who would be sad tho' the  
sky be a-graying,  
And meadow and woodlands are  
empty and bare;

For softly and merrily now there  
come playing,  
The little white birds thro' the  
winter-kissed air.

The squirrel's enjoying the rest  
of the thrifty,

He munches his store in the old  
hollow tree;

Tho' cold is the blast and the  
snow-flakes are drifty

He fears the white flock not a  
whit more than we.

#### *Chorus:*

Then heigho for the flying snow!  
Over the whitened roads we go,  
With pulses that tingle,  
And sleigh-bells a-jingle  
For winter's white birds here's a  
cheery heigho!

### A CHRISTMAS FOLKSONG

DE win' is blowin' wahmah,  
An hit's blowin' f'om de bay;  
Dey's a so't o' mist a-risin'  
All erlong de meddah way;

Dey ain't a hint o' frostin'  
On de groun' ner in de sky,  
An' dey ain't no use in hopin'  
Dat de snow'll 'mence to fly.  
It's goin' to be a green Christ-  
mas,  
An' sad de day fu' me.  
I wish dis was de las' one  
Dat evah I should see.

Dey's dancin' in de cabin,  
Dey's spahkin' by de tree;  
But dancin' times an' spahkin'  
Are all done pas' fur me.  
Dey's feastin' in de big house,  
Wid all de windahs wide —  
Is dat de way fu' people  
To meet de Christmas-tide?  
It's goin' to be a green Christ-  
mas,  
No mattah what you say.  
Dey's us dat will remembah  
An' grieve de comin' day.

Dey's des a bref o' dampness  
A-clingin' to my cheek;  
De aih's been dahk an' heavy  
An' threatenin' fu' a week,  
But not wid signs o' wintah,  
Dough wintah'd seem so deah —  
De wintah's out o' season,  
An' Christmas eve is heah.  
It's goin' to be a green Christ-  
mas,  
An' oh, how sad de day!  
Go ax de hongry chu'chya'd,  
An' see what hit will say.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Dey's Allen on de hillside,  
An' Marfy in de plain;  
Fu' Christmas was like springtime,  
An' come wid sun an' rain.  
Dey's Ca'line, John, an' Susie,  
Wid only dis one lef':  
An' now de curse is comin'  
Wid murder in hits bref.  
It's goin' to be a green Christ-  
mas —  
Des hyeah my words an'  
see:  
Befo' de summah beckons  
Dey's many 'll weep wid  
me.

### THE FOREST GREETING

Good hunting! — aye, good hunt-  
ing,  
Wherever the forests call;  
But ever a heart beats hot with  
fear,  
And what of the birds that fall?

Good hunting! — aye, good hunt-  
ing,  
Wherever the north winds  
blow;  
But what of the stag that calls for  
his mate?  
And what of the wounded doe?

Good hunting! — aye, good hunt-  
ing;  
And ah! we are bold and strong;

But our triumph call through the  
forest hall  
Is a brother's funeral song.

For we are brothers ever,  
Panther and bird and bear;  
Man and the weakest that fear his  
face,  
Born to the nest or lair.

Yes, brothers, and who shall judge  
us?  
Hunters and game are we;  
But who gave the right for me to  
smite?  
Who boasts when he smiteth me?

Good hunting! — aye, good hunt-  
ing,  
And dim is the forest track;  
But the sportsman Death comes  
striding on:  
Brothers, the way is black.

### THE LILY OF THE VALLEY

SWEETEST of the flowers a-bloom-  
ing  
In the fragrant vernal days  
Is the Lily of the Valley  
With its soft, retiring ways.

Well, you chose this humble blos-  
som  
As the nurse's emblem flower,  
Who grows more like her ideal  
Every day and every hour.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Like the Lily of the Valley  
In her honesty and worth,  
Ah, she blooms in truth and virtue  
In the quiet nooks of earth.

Tho' she stands erect in honor  
When the heart of mankind  
bleeds,  
Still she hides her own deserving  
In the beauty of her deeds.

In the silence of the darkness  
Where no eye may see and know,  
There her footsteps shod with  
mercy,  
And fleet kindness come and go.

Not amid the sounds of plaudits,  
Nor before the garish day,  
Does she shed her soul's sweet per-  
fume,  
Does she take her gentle way.

But alike her ideal flower,  
With its honey-laden breath,  
Still her heart blooms forth its  
beauty  
In the valley shades of death.

### ENCOURAGED

BECAUSE you love me I have  
much achieved,  
Had you despised me then I must  
have failed,  
But since I knew you trusted  
and believed,

I could not disappoint you and so  
prevailed.

### TO J. Q.

WHAT are the things that make  
life bright?

A star gleam in the night.  
What hearts us for the coming  
fray?

The dawn tints of the day.  
What helps to speed the weary  
mile?

A brother's friendly smile.  
What turns o' gold the evening  
gray?

A flower beside the way.

### DIPLOMACY

TELL your love where the roses  
blow,

And the hearts of the lilies  
quiver,

Not in the city's gleam and glow,  
But down by a half-sunned river.

Not in the crowded ball-room's  
glare,

That would be fatal, Marie,  
Marie,

How can she answer you then and  
there?

So come then and stroll with me,  
my dear,

Down where the birds call,  
Marie, Marie.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

### SCAMP

Ain't 't nice to have a mammy  
W'en you kin' o' tiahed out  
Wid a-playin' in de meddah,  
An' a-runnin' roun' about  
Till hit's made you mighty hongry,  
An' yo' nose hit gits to know  
What de smell means dat's a-  
comin'

F'om de open cabin do'?  
She wash yo' face,  
An' mek yo' place,  
You's hongry as a tramp;  
Den hit's eat you suppah right  
away,  
You sta'vin' little scamp.

W'en you's full o' braid an' bacon,  
An' dey ain't no mo' to eat,  
An' de lasses dat's a-stickin'  
On yo' face ta'se kin' o' sweet,  
Don' you t'ink hit's kin' o' pleasin'  
Fu' to have som'boday neah  
Dat'll wipe yo' han's an' kiss you  
Fo' dey lif' you f'om you' cheah?  
To smile so sweet,  
An' wash yo' feet,  
An' leave 'em co'l an' damp;  
Den hit's come let me undress  
you, now  
You lazy little scamp.

Don' yo' eyes git awful heavy,  
An' yo' lip git awful slack,  
Ain't dey som'p'n' kin' o' weak-  
nin'  
In de backbone of yo' back?

Don' yo' knees feel kin' o' trimbly,  
An' yo' head go bobbin' roun',  
W'en you says yo' "Now I lay  
me,"

An' is sno'in on de "down"?  
She kiss yo' nose,  
She kiss yo' toes,  
An' den tu'n out de lamp,  
Den hit's creep into yo' trunnel  
baid,  
You sleepy little scamp.

### WADIN' IN DE CRICK

DAYS git wa'm an' wa'mah,  
School gits mighty dull,  
Seems lak dese hyeah teachahs  
Mus' feel mussiful.  
Hookey's wrong, I know it  
Ain't no gent'man's trick;  
But de aih's a-callin',  
"Come on to de crick."

Dah de watah's gu'glin'  
Ovah shiny stones,  
Des hit's ve'y singin'  
Seems to soothe yo' bones.  
W'at's de use o' waitin'  
Go on good an' quick:  
Dain't no fun lak dis hyeah  
Wadin' in de crick.

W'at dat jay-b'ud sayin'?  
Bettah shet yo' haid,  
Fus' t'ing dat you fin' out,  
You'll be layin' daid.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Jay-bu'ds sich a tattlah,  
Des seem lak his trick  
Fu' to tell on folkses  
Wadin' in de crick.

Willer boughs a-bendin'  
Hidin' of de sky,  
Wavin' kin' o' frien'ly  
Ez de win' go by,  
Elum trees a-shinin',  
Dahk an' green an' thick,  
Seem to say, "I see yo'  
Wadin' in de crick."

But de trees don' chattah,  
Dey des look an' sigh  
Lak hit's kin' o' peaceful  
Des a-bein' nigh,  
An' yo' t'ank yo' Mastah  
Dat dey trunks is thick  
W'en yo' mammy fin's you  
Wadin' in de crick.

Den yo' run behin' dem  
Lak yo' scaihed to def,  
Mammy come a-flyin',  
Mos' nigh out o' bref;  
But she set down gentle  
An' she drap huh stick,—  
An' fus' t'ing, dey's mammy  
Wadin' in de crick.

### THE QUILTING

DOLLY sits a-quilting by her  
mother, stich by stich,  
Gracious, how my pulses throb,  
how my fingers itch,

While I note her dainty waist and  
her slender hand,  
As she matches this and that, she  
stitches strand by strand.  
And I long to tell her Life's a  
quilt and I'm a patch;  
Love will do the stitching if she'll  
only be my match.

### PARTED

SHE wrapped her soul in a lace of  
lies,

With a prime deceit to pin it;  
And I thought I was gaining a  
fearsome prize,  
So I staked my soul to win it.

We wed and parted on her com-  
plaint,  
And both were a bit of barter,  
Tho' I'll confess that I'm no saint,  
I'll swear that she's no martyr.

### FOREVER

I HAD not known before  
Forever was so long a word.  
The slow stroke of the clock of  
time  
I had not heard.

'Tis hard to learn so late;  
It seems no sad heart really  
learns,  
But hopes and trusts and doubts  
and fears,  
And bleeds and burns.



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

The night is not all dark,  
Nor is the day all it seems,  
But each may bring me this relief —  
My dreams and dreams.

I had not known before  
That Never was so sad a word,  
So wrap me in forgetfulness —  
I have not heard.

### THE PLANTATION CHILD'S LULLABY

WINTAH time hit comin'  
Stealin' thoo de night;  
Wake up in the mo'nin'  
Evah t'ing is white;  
Cabin lookin' lonesome  
Stannin' in de snow,  
Meks you kin' o' nervous,  
W'en de win' hit blow.

Trompin' back from feedin',  
Col' an' wet an' blue,  
Homespun jacket ragged,  
Win' a-blowin' thoo.  
Cabin lookin' cheerful,  
Unnerneaf de do',  
Yet you kin' o' keerful  
W'en de win' hit blow.

Hickory log a-blazin'  
Light a-lookin' red,  
Faith o' eyes o' peepin'  
'Rom a trun'le bed,  
Little feet a-patterin'  
Cleak across de flo';

Bettah had be keerful  
W'en de win' hit blow.

Suppah done an' ovah,  
Evah t'ing is still;  
Listen to de snowman  
Slippin' down de hill.  
Ashes on de fiah,  
Keep it wa'm but low.  
What's de use o' keerin'  
Ef de win' do blow?

Smoke house full o' bacon,  
Brown an' sweet an' good;  
Taters in de cellah,  
'Possum roam de wood;  
Little baby snoozin'  
Des ez ef he know.  
What's de use o' keerin'  
Ef de win' do blow?

### TWILIGHT

'Twixt a smile and a tear,  
'Twixt a song and a sigh,  
'Twixt the day and the dark,  
When the night draweth nigh.

Ah, sunshine may fade  
From the heavens above,  
No twilight have we  
To the day of our love.

### CURIOSITY

MAMMY's in de kitchen, an' de  
do' is shet;  
All de pickaninnies climb an' tug  
an' sweat,

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Gittin' to de winder, stickin' dah  
lak flies,  
Evah one ermong us des all nose  
an' eyes.

"Whut's she cookin', Isaac?"  
"Whut's she cookin', Jake?"  
"Is it sweet pertaters? Is hit pie  
er cake?"

But we couldn't mek out even  
whah we stood  
Whut was mammy cookin' dat  
could smell so good.

Mammy spread de winder, an'  
she frown an' frown,  
How de pickaninnies come a-tum-  
blin' down!

Den she say: "Ef you-all keeps  
a-peepin' in,  
How I'se gwine to whup you, my!  
't 'ill be a sin!

Need n' come a-sniffin' an' a-nosin'  
hyeah,  
'Ca'se I knows my business, nevah  
feah."

Won't somebody tell us—how I  
wish dey would!—  
Whut is mammy cookin' dat it  
smells so good?

We know she means business, an'  
we dassent stay,  
Dough it's mighty tryin' fuh to  
go erway;  
But we goes a-troopin' down de  
ol' wood-track

'Twell dat steamin' kitchen brings  
us stealin' back,  
Climbin' an' a-peepin' so's to see  
inside.

Whut on earf kin mammy be so  
sha'p to hide?  
I'd des up an' tell folks w'en I  
knowed I could,  
Ef I was a-cookin' t'ings dat smelt  
so good.

Mammy in de oven, an' I see huh  
smile;  
Moufs mus' be a-wat'rin' roun'  
hyeah fuh a mile;  
Den we almos' hollah ez we hu'ies  
down,  
'Ca'se hit's apple dumplin's, big an'  
fat an' brown!

W'en de do' is opened, solemn lak  
an' slow,  
Wisht you see us settin' all dah  
in a row  
Innercent an' p'opah, des lak chill-  
un should  
W'en dey mammy's cookin' t'ings  
dat smell so good.

### OPPORTUNITY

GRANNY'S gone a-visitin',  
Seen huh git huh shawl  
W'en I was a-hidin' down  
Hime de gyahden wall.  
Seen huh put her bonnet on,  
Seen huh tie de strings,  
An' I'se gone to dreamin' now  
'Bout dem cakes an' t'ings.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

On de she'f behime de do'—

Mussy, what a feas'!

Soon ez she gits out o' sight,

I kin eat in peace.

I bin watchin' fu' a week

Des fu' dis hyeah chance.

Mussy, w'en I gits in daih,

I'll des sholy dance.

Lemon pie an' gingah-cake,

Let me set an' t'ink —

Vinegah an' sugah, too,

Dat'll mek a drink;

Ef dey's one t'ing dat I loves

Mos' pu'ticlahly,

It is eatin' sweet t'ings an'

A-drinkin' Sangaree.

Lawdy, won' po' granny raih

W'en she see de she'f;

W'en I t'ink erbout huh face,

I's mos' 'shamed myse'f.

Well, she gone, an 'hyeah I is,

Back behime de do'—

Look hyeah! gran' 's done 'spected  
me,

Dain't no sweets no mo'.

Evah sweet is hid erway,

Job des done up brown;

Pusson t'ink dat someun t'ought

Dey was t'eves erroun';

Dat des breaks my heart in two,

Oh how bad I feel!

Des to t'ink my own gramma

B'lieved dat I 'u'd steal!

## PUTTIN' THE BABY AWAY

EIGHT of 'em hyeah all tol' an' yet

Dese eyes o' mine is wringin' wet;

My haht's a-achin' ha'd an' so',

De way hit nevah ached befo';

My soul's a-pleadin', "Lawd, give  
back

Dis little lonesome baby black,

Dis one, dis las' po' he'pless one

Whose little race was too soon  
run."

Po' Little Jim, des fo' yeahs ol'

A-layin' down so still an' col'.

Somehow hit don' seem ha'dly  
faih,

To have my baby lyin' daih

Wi'dout a smile upon his face,

Wi'dout a look erbout de place;

He ust to be so full o' fun

Hit don' seem right dat all's done,  
done.

Des eight in all but I don' caih,

Dey wa'nt a single one to spaih;

De worl' was big, so was my haht,

An' dis hyeah baby owned hit's  
pah't;

De house was po', dey clothes was  
rough,

But daih was meat an' meal  
enough;

An' daih was room fu' little Jim;

Oh! Lawd, what made you call fu'  
him?

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

It do seem monst'ous ha'd to-day,  
To lay dis baby boy away;  
I'd learned to love his teasin'  
smile,  
He mought o' des been lef' er-  
while;  
You wouldn't t'ought wid all de  
folks,  
Dat's roun' hyeah mixin' teahs an'  
jokes,  
De Lawd u'd had de time to see  
Dis chile an' tek him 'way f'om  
me.

But let it go, I reckon Jim,  
'Ll des go right straight up to  
Him  
Dat took him f'om his mammy's  
nest  
An' lef' dis achin' in my breas',  
An' lookin' in dat fathah's face  
An' 'memberin' dis lone sorrerin'  
place,  
He'll say, "Good Lawd, you ought  
to had  
Do sumpin' fu' to comfo't dad!"

### THE FISHER CHILD'S LUL- LABY

THE wind is out in its rage to-  
night,  
And your father is far at sea.  
The rime on the window is hard  
and white  
But dear, you are near to me.

Heave ho, weave low,  
Waves of the briny deep;  
Seethe low and breathe low,  
But sleep you, my little one,  
sleep, sleep.

The little boat rocks in the cove no  
more,  
But the flying sea-gulls wail;  
I peer through the darkness that  
wraps the shore,  
For sight of a home set sail.  
Heave ho, weave low,  
Waves of the briny deep;  
Seethe low and breathe low,  
But sleep you, my little one,  
sleep, sleep.

Ay, lad of mine, thy father may  
die  
In the gale that rides the sea,  
But we'll not believe it, not you  
and I,  
Who mind us of Galilee.  
Heave ho, weave low,  
Waves of the briny deep;  
Seethe low and breathe low,  
But sleep you, my little one,  
sleep, sleep.

### FAITH

I's a-gittin' weary of de way dat  
people do,  
De folks dat's got dey 'ligion in  
dey fiah-place an' flue;  
Dey's allus somep'n comin' so de  
spit'll have to turn,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

An' hit tain't no p'oposition fu' to  
mek de hickory bu'n.

Ef de 'sweet pertater fails us an' de  
go'geous yallah yam,

We kin tek a bit o' comfo't f'om  
ouah sto' o' summah jam.

W'en de snow hit git to flyin',  
dat's de Mastah's own desiah,

De Lawd'll run de wintah an' yo'  
mammy'll run de fiah.

I ain' skeered because de win' hit  
staht to raih and blow,

I ain't bothahed w'en he come er  
rattlin' at de do',

Let him taih hisse'f an' shout, let  
him blow an' bawl,

Dat's de time de branches shek an'  
bresh-wood 'mence to fall.

W'en de sto'm er railin' an' de  
shettahs blowin' 'bout,

Dat de time de fiah-place crack  
hits welcome out.

Tain' my livin' business fu' to  
trouble ner enquiah,

De Lawd'll min' de wintah an' my  
mammy'll min' de fiah.

Ash-cake allus gits ez brown w'en  
February's hyeah

Ez it does in bakin' any othah time  
o' yeah.

De bacon smell ez callin'-like, de  
kittle rock an' sing,

De same way in de wintah dat dey  
do it in de spring;

Dey ain't no use in mopin' 'round  
an' lookin' mad an' glum

Erbout de wintah season, fu' hit's  
des plumb boun' to come;

An' ef it comes to runnin' t'ings  
I's willin' to retiah,

De Lawd'll min' de wintah an'  
my mammy'll min' de fiah.

### THE FARM CHILD'S LULLABY

OH, the little bird is rocking in  
the cradle of the wind,

And it's bye, my little wee one,  
bye;

The harvest all is gathered and  
the pippins all are binned;

Bye, my little wee one, bye;

The little rabbit's hiding in the  
golden shock of corn,

The thrifty squirrel's laughing  
bunny's idleness to scorn;

You are smiling with the angels  
in your slumber, smile till  
morn;

So it's bye, my little wee one,  
bye.

There'll be plenty in the cellar,  
there'll be plenty on the  
shelf;

Bye, my little wee one, bye;

There'll be goodly store of sweet-  
ings for a dainty little elf;

Bye, my little wee one, bye.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

The snow may be a-flying o'er the  
meadow and the hill,  
The ice has checked the chatter of  
the little laughing rill,  
But in your cosey cradle you are  
warm and happy still;  
So bye, my little wee one, bye.

Why, the Bob White thinks the  
snowflake is a brother to his  
song;

Bye, my little wee one, bye;  
And the chimney sings the sweeter  
when the wind is blowing  
strong;

Bye, my little wee one, bye;  
The granary's overflowing, full is  
cellar, crib, and bin,

The wood has paid its tribute and  
the ax has ceased its din;

The winter may not harm you  
when you're sheltered safe  
within;

So bye, my little wee one, bye.

Oh, many have sought it,  
And all would have bought it,  
With the blood we so recklessly  
spend;  
But none has uncovered,  
The gold, nor discovered  
The spot at the rainbow's end.

They have sought it in battle,  
And e'en where the rattle  
Of dice with man's blasphemy  
blends;

But howe'er persuasive,  
It still proves evasive,  
This place where the rainbow  
ends.

I own for my pleasure,  
I yearn not for treasure,  
Though gold has a power it  
lends;

And I have a notion,  
To find without motion,  
The place where the rainbow  
ends.

### THE PLACE WHERE THE RAINBOW ENDS

THERE'S a fabulous story  
Full of splendor and glory,  
That Arabian legends trans-  
cends;

Of the wealth without measure;

The coffers of treasure,

At the place where the rainbow  
ends.

The pot may hold pottage,  
The place be a cottage,  
That a humble contentment de-  
fends,

Only joy fills its coffer,

But spite of the scoffer,

There's the place where the rain-  
bow ends.

Where care shall be quiet,  
And love shall run riot,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

And I shall find wealth in my  
friends;  
Then truce to the story,  
Of riches and glory;  
There's the place where the rain-  
bow ends.

### HOPE

DE dog go howlin' 'long de road,  
De night come shiverin' down;  
My back is tiahed of its load,  
I cain't be fu' f'om town.  
No mattah ef de way is long,  
My haht is swellin' wid a song,  
No mattah 'bout de frownin'  
skies,  
I'll soon be home to see my Lize.

My shadder staggah on de way,  
It's monstous col' to-night;  
But I kin hyeah my honey say  
"W'y bless me if de sight  
O' you ain't good fu' my so'  
eyes."  
(Dat talk's dis lak my lady Lize)  
It's so'y case de way was long  
But Lawd you bring me love  
an' song.

No mattah ef de way is long,  
An' ef I trimbles so'  
I knows de fiah's burnin' strong,  
Behime my Lizy's do'.  
An' daih my res' an' joy shell be,  
Whaih my ol' wife's awaitin'  
me —

Why what I keer fu' stingin'  
blas',  
I see huh windah light at las'.

### APPRECIATION

MY muvver's ist the nicest one  
'At ever lived wiz folks;  
She lets you have ze mostes' fun,  
An' laffs at all your jokes.

I got a ol' maid auntie, too,  
The worst you ever saw;  
Her eyes ist bore you through and  
through,—  
She ain't a bit like ma.

She's ist as slim as slim can be,  
An' when you want to slide  
Down on ze balusters, w'y she  
Says 'at she's harrified.

She ain't as nice as Uncle Ben,  
What says 'at little boys  
Won't never grow to be big men  
Unless they're fond of noise.

But muvver's nicer zan 'em all,  
She calls you, "precious lamb,"  
An' let's you roll your ten-pin ball,  
An' spreads your bread wiz jam.

An' when you're bad, she ist looks  
sad,

You fink she's goin' to cry;  
An' when she don't you're awful  
glad,

An' den you're good, Oh, my!



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

At night, she takes ze softest  
hand,

An' lays it on your head,  
An' says "Be off to Sleepy-Land  
By way o' trundle-bed."

So when you fink what muvver  
knows

An' aunts an' uncle tan't,  
It skeers a feller; ist suppose  
His muvver 'd been a aunt.

### A SONG

ON a summer's day as I sat by a  
stream,

A dainty maid came by,  
And she blessed my sight like a  
rosy dream,

And left me there to sigh, to  
sigh,

And left me there to sigh, to  
sigh.

On another day as I sat by the  
stream,

This maiden paused a while,

Then I made me bold as I told  
my dream,

She heard it with a smile, a  
smile,

She heard it with a smile, a  
smile.

Oh, the months have fled and the  
autumn's red,

The maid no more goes by;

For my dream came true and the  
maid I wed,

And now no more I sigh, I  
sigh,

And now no more I sigh.

### DAY

THE gray dawn on the mountain  
top

Is slow to pass away.

Still lays him by in sluggish  
dreams,

The golden God of day.

And then a light along the hills,

Your laughter silvery gay;

The Sun God wakes, a bluebird  
trills,

You come and it is day.

### TO DAN

STEP me now a bridal measure,

Work give way to love and leisure,

Hearts be free and hearts be gay —

Doctor Dan doth wed to-day.

Diagnosis, cease your squalling —

Check that scalpel's senseless bawling,  
ing,

Put that ugly knife away —

Doctor Dan doth wed to-day.

'Tis no time for things unsightly,

Life's the day and life goes lightly;

Science lays aside her sway —

Love rules Dr. Dan to-day.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Gather, gentlemen and ladies,  
For the nuptial feast now made  
is,  
Swing your garlands, chant your  
lay  
For the pair who wed to-day.

Wish them happy days and many,  
Troubles few and griefs not any,  
Lift your brimming cups and say  
God bless them who wed to-day.

Then a cup to Cupid daring,  
Who for conquest ever faring,  
With his arrows dares assail  
E'en a doctor's coat of mail.

So with blithe and happy hymning  
And with harmless goblets brim-  
ming,  
Dance a step — musicians play —  
Doctor Dan doth wed to-day.

### WHAT'S THE USE

WHAT's the use o' folks a-frownin'  
When the way's a little rough?  
Frowns lay out the road fur smil-  
in'

You'll be wrinkled soon enough.  
What's the use?

What's the use o' folks a-sighin'?  
It's an awful waste o' breath,  
An' a body can't stand wastin'  
What he needs so bad in death.  
What's the use?

What's the use o' even weepin'?  
Might as well go long an' smile.  
Life, our longest, strongest arrow,  
Only lasts a little while.  
What's the use?

### A LAZY DAY

THE trees bend down along the  
stream,

Where anchored swings my tiny  
boat.

The day is one to drowse and  
dream

And list the thrush's throttling  
note.

When music from his bosom bleeds  
Among the river's rustling reeds.

No ripple stirs the placid pool,  
When my adventurous line is  
cast,

A truce to sport, while clear and  
cool,

The mirrored clouds slide softly  
past.

The sky gives back a blue divine,  
And all the world's wide wealth  
is mine.

A pickerel leaps, a bow of light,  
The minnows shine from side to  
side.

The first faint breeze comes up  
the tide —

I pause with half uplifted oar,  
While night drifts down to claim  
the shore.

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

## ADVICE

W'EN you full o' worry  
'Bout yo' wo'k an' sich,  
W'en you kind o' bothered  
Case you can't get rich,  
An' yo' neighboh p'ospah  
Past his jest desu'ts,  
An' de sneer of comerds  
Stuhes yo' heahrt an' hu'ts,  
Des don' pet yo' worries,  
Lay 'em on de she'f,  
Tek a little trouble  
Brothah, wid yo'se'f.

Ef a frien' comes mou'nin'  
'Bout his awful case,  
You know you don' grieve him  
Wid a gloomy face,  
But you wrassle wid him,  
Try to tek him in;  
Dough hit cracks yo' features,  
Law, you smile lak sin,  
Ain't you good ez he is?  
Don' you pine to def;  
Tek a little trouble  
Brothah, wid yo'se'f.

Ef de chillun pestahs,  
An' de baby's bad,  
Ef yo' wife gits narvous,  
An' you're gettin' mad,  
Des you grab yo' boot-strops,  
Hol' yo' body down,  
Stop a-tinkin' cuss-w'rds,  
Chase away de frown,  
Knock de haid o' worry,  
Twel dey ain' none lef';

Tek a little trouble,  
Brothah, wid yo'se'f.

## LIMITATIONS

EF you's only got de powah fe' to  
blow a little whistle,  
Keep ermong de people wid de  
whistles.  
Ef you don't, you'll fin' out sho'tly  
dat you's th'owed yo' fines'  
feelin'

In a place dat's all a bed o' this-  
tles.  
'Tain't no use a-goin' now, ez  
sho's you bo'n,  
A-squeakin' of yo' whistle 'g'inst  
a gread big ho'n.

Ef you ain't got but a teenchy bit  
o' victuals on de table,  
Whut' de use a-claimin' hit's a  
feas'?

Fe' de folks is mighty 'spicious,  
an' dey's ap' to come a-  
peerin',

Lookin' fe' de scraps you lef'  
at leas'.

W'en de meal's a-hidin' f'om de  
meal-bin's top,  
You needn't talk to hide it; ef you  
sta'ts, des stop.

Ef yo' min' kin only carry half a  
pint o' common idees,  
Don' go roun' a-sayin' hit's a  
bar'l;

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

'Ca'se de people gwine to test you,  
an' dey'll fin' out you's  
a-lyin',  
Den dey'll twis' yo' sayin's in a  
snarl.  
Wuss t'ing in de country dat I  
evah hyahed —  
A crow dot sat a-squawkin', "I's  
a mockin'-bird."

### A GOLDEN DAY

I FOUND you and I lost you,  
All on a gleaming day.  
The day was filled with sunshine,  
And the land was full of May.

A golden bird was singing  
Its melody divine,  
I found you and I loved you,  
And all the world was mine.

I found you and I lost you,  
All on a golden day,  
But when I dream of you, dear,  
It is always brimming May.

### THE UNLUCKY APPLE

TWAS the apple that in Eden  
Caused our father's primal fall;  
And the Trojan War, remem-  
ber —

'Twas an apple caused it all.  
So for weeks I've hesitated,  
You can guess the reason why,  
For I want to tell my darling  
She's the apple of my eye.

### THE DISCOVERY

THESE are the days of elfs and  
fays:

Who says that with the dreams of  
myth,  
These imps and elves disport them-  
selves?

Ah no, along the paths of song  
Do all the tiny folk belong.

Round all our homes,  
Kobolds and gnomes do daily cling,  
Then nightly fling their lanterns  
out.

And shout on shout, they join the  
rout,

And sing, and sing, within the  
sweet enchanted ring.

Where gleamed the guile of moon-  
light's smile,

Once paused I, listening for a  
while,

And heard the lay, unknown by  
day,—

The fairies' dancing roundelay.

Queen Mab was there, her shim-  
mering hair

Each fairy prince's heart's despair.  
She smiled to see their sparkling

glee,

And once I ween, she smiled at me.

Since when, you may by night or  
day,

Dispute the sway of elf-folk gay;  
But, hear me, stay!

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

I've learned the way to find Queen  
Mab and elf and fay.

Where e'er by streams, the moon-  
light gleams,  
Or on a meadow softly beams,  
There, footing round on dew-lit  
ground,  
The fairy folk may all be found.

### MORNING

THE mist has left the greening  
plain,  
The dew-drops shine like fairy  
rain,

The coquette rose awakes again  
Her lovely self adorning.  
The Wind is hiding in the trees,  
A sighing, soothing, laughing  
tease,

Until the rose says "Kiss me,  
please,"  
'Tis morning, 'tis morning.

With staff in hand and careless-  
free,  
The wanderer fares right jauntily,  
For towns and houses are, thinks  
he,

For scorning, for scorning.  
My soul is swift upon the wing,  
And in its deeps a song I bring;  
Come, Love, and we together sing,  
" 'Tis morning, 'tis morning."

### THE AWAKENING

I DID not know that life could be  
so sweet,  
I did not know the hours could  
speed so fleet,  
Till I knew you, and life was sweet  
again.  
The days grew brief with love  
and lack of pain —

I was a slave a few short days  
ago,  
The powers of Kings and Princes  
now I know;  
I would not be again in bondage  
save  
I had your smile, the liberty I  
crave.

### LOVE'S DRAFT

THE draft of love was cool and  
sweet  
You gave me in the cup,  
But, ah, love's fire is keen and  
fleet,  
And I am burning up.

Unless the tears I shed for you  
Shall quench this burning flame  
It will consume me through and  
through,  
And leave but ash—a name.

# PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

## A MUSICAL

OUTSIDE the rain upon the street,  
The sky all grim of hue,  
Inside, the music-painful sweet,  
And yet I heard but you.

As is a thrilling violin,  
So is your voice to me,  
And still above the other strains,  
It sang in ecstasy.

## TWELL DE NIGHT IS PAS'

ALL de night long twell de moon  
goes down,  
Lovin' I set at huh feet,  
Den fu' de long jou'ney back  
f'om de town,  
Ha'd, but de dreams mek it  
sweet.

All de night long twell de break of  
de day,  
Dreamin' agin in my sleep,  
Mandy comes drivin' my sorrers  
away,  
Axin' me, "Wha' fu' you  
weep?"

All de day long twell de sun goes  
down,  
Smilin', I ben' to my hoe,  
Fu' dough de weddah git nasty an'  
frown,  
One place I know I kin go.

All my life long twell de night has  
pas'

Let de wo'k come ez it will,  
So dat I fin' you, my honey, at las',  
Somewhah des ovah de hill.

## BLUE

STANDIN' at de winder,  
Feelin' kind o' glum,  
Listenin' to de raindrops  
Play de kettle drum,  
Lookin' crost de medders  
Swimmin' lak a sea;  
Lawd 'a' mussy on us,  
What's de good o' me?

Can't go out a-hoein',  
Wouldn't ef I could;  
Groun' too wet fu' huntin',  
Fishin' ain't no good.  
Too much noise fo' sleepin',  
No one hyeah to chat;  
Des mus' stan' an' listen  
To dat pit-a-pat.

Hills is gittin' misty,  
Valley's gittin' dahk;  
Watch-dog's 'mence a-howlin',  
Rathah have 'em ba'k  
Dan a-moanin' solemn  
Somewhah out o' sight;  
Rain-crow des a-chucklin'—  
Dis is his delight.

Mandy, bring my banjo,  
Bring de chillen in,

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Come in f'om de kitchen,  
I feel sick ez sin.  
Call in Uncle Isaac,  
Call Aunt Hannah, too,  
Tain't no use in talkin',  
Chile, I's sholy blue.

### DREAMIN' TOWN

COME away to dreamin' town,  
Mandy Lou, Mandy Lou,  
Whaih de skies don' nevah frown,  
Mandy Lou;  
Whaih he streets is paved with  
gol',  
Whaih de days is nevah col',  
An' no sheep strays f'om de fol',  
Mandy Lou.

Ain't you tiahed of every day,  
Mandy Lou, Mandy Lou,  
Tek my han' an' come away,  
Mandy Lou,  
To the place whaih dreams is  
King,  
Whaih my heart hol's everything,  
An' my soul can allus sing,  
Mandy Lou.

Come away to dream wid me,  
Mandy Lou, Mandy Lou,  
Whaih our hands an' hea'ts are  
free,  
Mandy Lou;  
Whaih de sands is shinin' white,  
Whaih de rivahs glistens bright,  
Mandy Lou.

Come away to dreamland town,  
Mandy Lou, Mandy Lou,  
Whaih de fruit is bendin' down;  
Des fu' you.  
Smooth your brow of lovin' brown;  
An' my love will be its crown;  
Come away to dreamin' town,  
Mandy Lou.

### AT NIGHT

WHUT time 'd dat clock strike?  
Nine? No — eight;  
I didn't think hit was so late.  
Aer chew! I must 'a' got a cough,  
I raally b'lieve I did doze off —  
Hit's mighty soothin' to de tiah,  
A-dozin' dis way by de fiah;  
Oo oom — hit feels so good to  
stretch  
I sutny is one weary wretch!

Look hyeah, dat boy done gone to  
sleep!  
He des ain't wo'th his boa'd an'  
keep;  
I des don't b'lieve he'd bat his  
eyes  
If Gab'el called him fo'm de  
skies!  
But sleepin's good dey ain't no  
doubt —  
Dis pipe o' mine is done gone  
out.  
Don't bu'n a minute, bless my soul  
Des please to han' me dat al  
coal.



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

You 'Lias git up now, my son,  
Seems lak my nap is des begun;  
You sūtny mus' ma'k down de day  
W'en I treats comp'ny dis away!  
W'y, Brother Jones, dat drowse  
come on,  
An' laws! I dremp dat you was  
gone!  
You 'Lias, whaih yo' mannahts,  
suh,  
To hyeah me call an' nevah  
stuh!

To-morrer mo'nin' w'en I call  
Dat boy'll be sleepin' to beat all,  
Don't mek no diffunce how I roah,  
He'll des lay up an' sno' and  
sno'.

Now boy, you done hyeahed whut  
I said,  
You bettah tek yo'se'f yo baid,  
Case ef you gits me good an'  
wrong  
I'll mek dat sno' a diffunt song.

Dis wood fiah is invitin' dho',  
Hit seems to wa'm de ve'y flo'—  
An' nuffin' ain't a whit ez sweet,  
Ez settin' toastin' of yo' feet.  
Hit mek you drowsy, too, but La!  
Hyeah, 'Lias, don't you hyeah  
yo' ma?

Ef I gits sta'ted f'om dis cheah  
I' lay, you scamp, I'll mek you  
heah!

To-morrer mo'nin' I kin bawl  
Twell all de neighbors hyeah  
me call;

An' you'll be snoozin' des ez deep  
Ez if de day was made fu' sleep;  
Hit's funny when you got a cough  
Somehow yo' voice seems too fu'  
off—  
Can't wake dat boy fu' all I say,  
I reckon he'll sleep daih twell  
day!

### KIDNAPED

I HELD my heart so far from harm,  
I let it wander far and free  
In mead and mart, without alarm,  
Assured it must come back to  
me.

And all went well till on a day,  
Learned Dr. Cupid wandered  
by  
A search along our sylvan way  
For some peculiar butterfly.

A flash of wings, a hurried dive,  
A flutter and a short-lived flit;  
This Scientist, as I am alive  
Had seen my heart and captured  
it.

Right tightly now 'tis held among  
The specimens that he has  
trapped,  
And sings (Oh, love is ever  
young),  
'Tis passing sweet to be kid-  
naped.

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

## COMPENSATION

BECAUSE I had loved so deeply,  
Because I had loved so long,  
God in His great compassion  
Gave me the gift of song.

Because I have loved so vainly,  
And sung with such faltering  
breath,  
The Master in infinite mercy  
Offers the boon of Death.

## WINTER'S APPROACH

DE sun hit shine an' de win' hit  
blow,  
Ol' Brer Rabbit be a-layin' low,  
He know dat de wintah time  
a-comin',  
De huntah man he walk an' wait,  
He walk right by Brer Rabbit's  
gate —  
He know —

De dog he lick his sliverin' chop,  
An' he tongue 'gin' his mouf go  
flop, flop —  
He —

He rub his nose fu' to clah his  
scent  
So's to tell w'ich way dat cotton-  
tail went,  
He —

De huntah's wife she set an' spin  
A good wahn coat fu' to wrop him  
in  
She —

She look at de skillet an' she smile,  
oh my!  
An' ol' Brer Rabbit got to sholy  
fly.  
Dey know.

## ANCHORED

IF thro' the sea of night which  
here surrounds me,  
I could swim out beyond the  
farthest star,  
Break every barrier of circumstance  
that bounds me,  
And greet the Sun of sweeter  
life afar,  
Tho' near you there is passion,  
grief, and sorrow,  
And out there rest and joy and  
peace and all,  
I should renounce that beckoning  
for to-morrow,  
I could not choose to go beyond  
your call.

## THE VETERAN

UNDERNEATH the autumn sky,  
Haltingly, the lines go by.  
Ah, would steps were blithe and  
gay,  
As when first they marched away,  
Smile on lip and curl on brow,—  
Only white-faced gray-beards now,  
Standing on life's outer verge,  
E'en the marches sound a dirge.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Blow, you bugles, play, you fife,  
Rattle, drums, for dearest life.  
Let the flags wave freely so,  
As the marching legions go,  
Shout, hurrah and laugh and jest,  
This is memory at its best.  
(Did you notice at your quip,  
That old comrade's quivering lip?)

Ah, I see them as they come,  
Stumbling with the rumbling  
drum;

But a sight more sad to me  
E'en than these ranks could be  
Was that one with cane upraised  
Who stood by and gazed and  
gazed,

Trembling, solemn, lips com-  
pressed,

Longing to be with the rest.

Did he dream of old alarms,  
As he stood, "presented arms"?  
Did he think of field and camp  
And the unremitting tramp  
Mile on mile — the lonely guard  
When he kept his midnight ward?  
Did he dream of wounds and scars  
In that bitter war of wars?

What of that? He stood and  
stands

In my memory — trembling hands,  
Whitened beard and cane and all  
As if waiting for the call  
Once again: "To arms, my sons,"

And his ears hear far-off guns,  
Roll of cannon and the tread  
Of the legions of the Dead!

### YESTERDAY AND TO- MORROW

YESTERDAY I held your hand,  
Reverently I pressed it,  
And its gentle yieldingness  
From my soul I blessed it.

But to-day I sit alone,  
Sad and sore repining;  
Must our gold forever know  
Flames for the refining?

Yesterday I walked with you,  
Could a day be sweeter?  
Life was all a lyric song  
Set to tricky meter.

Ah, to-day is like a dirge,—  
Place my arms around you,  
Let me feel the same dear joy  
As when first I found you.

Let me once retrace my steps,  
From these roads unpleasant,  
Let my heart and mind and soul  
All ignore the present.

Yesterday the iron seared  
And to-day means sorrow.  
Pause, my soul, arise, arise,  
Look where gleams the morrow.

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

## THE CHANGE

LOVE used to carry a bow, you  
know,  
But now he carries a taper;  
It is either a length of wax aglow,  
Or a twist of lighted paper.

I pondered a little about the scamp,  
And then I decided to follow  
His wandering journey to field and  
camp,  
Up hill, down dale or hollow.

I dogged the rollicking, gay, young  
blade  
In every species of weather;  
Till, leading me straight to the  
home of a maid  
He left us there together.

And then I saw it, oh, sweet sur-  
prise,  
The taper it set a-burning  
The love-light brimming my lady's  
eyes,  
And my heart with the fire of  
yearning.

## THE CHASE

THE wind told the little leaves to  
hurry,  
And chased them down the way,  
While the mother tree laughed  
loud in glee,  
For she thought her babes at  
play.

The cruel wind and the rain  
laughed loudly,  
We'll bury them deep, they said,  
And the old tree grieves, and the  
little leaves  
Lie low, all chilled and dead.

## SUPPOSE

IF 'twere fair to suppose  
That your heart were not taken,  
That the dew from the rose  
Petals still were not shaken,  
I should pluck you,  
Howe'er you should thorn me  
and scorn me,  
And wear you for life as the green  
of the bower.

If 'twere fair to suppose  
That that road was for va-  
grants,  
That the wind and the rose,  
Counted all in their fragrance;  
Oh, my dear one,  
By love, I should take you and  
make you,  
The green of my life from the  
scintillant hour.

## THE DEATH OF THE FIRST BORN

COVER him over with daisies white  
And eke with the poppies red,  
Sit with me here by his couch to-  
night,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

For the First-Born, Love, is  
dead.

Poor little fellow, he seemed so  
fair

As he lay in my jealous arms;  
Silent and cold he is lying there  
Stripped of his darling charms.

Musty and strong he had grown  
forsooth,

Sweet with an infinite grace,  
Proud in the force of his conquer-  
ing youth,  
Laughter alight in his face.

Oh, but the blast, it was cruel and  
keen,

And ah, but the chill it was rare;  
The look of the winter-kissed  
flow'r you've seen

When meadows and fields were  
bare.

Can you not wake from this white,  
cold sleep

And speak to me once again?  
True that your slumber is deep,  
so deep,

But deeper by far is my pain.

Cover him over with daisies white,  
And eke with the poppies red,  
Sit with me here by his couch to-  
night,

For the First-Born, Love, is  
dead.

## BEIN' BACK HOME

HOME agin, an' home to stay —  
Yes, it's nice to be away.

Plenty things to do an' see,  
But the old place seems to me  
Jest about the proper thing.  
Mebbe 'ts 'cause the mem'ries  
cling

Closer 'round yore place o' birth  
'N any other spot on earth.

W'y it's nice jest settin' here,  
Lookin' out an' seein' clear,  
'Thout no smoke, ner dust, ner  
haze

In these sweet October days.  
What's as good as that there lane,  
Kind o' browned from last night's  
rain?

'Pears like home has got the start  
When the goal's a feller's heart.

What's as good as that there jay  
Screechin' up'ards towards the  
gray

Skies? An' tell me, what's as fine  
As that full-leaved pumpkin vine?  
Tow'rin' buildin's — yes, they're  
good;

But in sight o' field and wood,  
Then a feller understan's  
'Bout the house not made with  
han's.

Let the others rant an' roam  
When they git away from home;  
Jest gi' me my old settee

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

An' my pipe beneath a tree;  
Sight o' medders green an' still,  
Now and then a gentle hill,  
Apple orchards, full o' fruit,  
Nigh a cider press to boot —

That's the thing jest done up  
brown;

D'want to be too nigh to town;  
Want to have the smells an' sights,  
An' the dreams o' long still nights,  
With the friends you used to know  
In the keerless long ago —  
Same old cronies, same old folks,  
Same old cider, same old jokes.

Say, it's nice a-gittin' back,  
When yore pulse is growin' slack,  
An' yore breath begins to wheeze  
Like a fair-set valley breeze;  
Kind o' nice to set aroun'  
On the old familiar groun',  
Knowin' that when Death does  
come,  
That he'll find you right at home.

### THE OLD CABIN

In de dead of night I sometimes,  
Git to t'inkin' of de pas'  
An' de days w'en slavery helt me  
In my mis'ry — ha'd an' fas'.  
Dough de time was mighty tryin',  
In dese houahs somehow hit  
seem  
Dat a brightah light come slippin'  
Thoo de kivahs of my dream.

An' my min' fu'gits de whuppin'  
Drops de feah o' block an' lash  
An' flies straight to somep'n' joy  
ful

In a secon's lightnin' flash.  
Den hit seems I see a vision  
Of a dearah long ago  
Of de childern tumblin' roun' me  
By my rough ol' cabin do'.

Talk about yo' go'geous mansion  
An' yo' big house great an  
gran',

Des bring up de fines' palace  
Dat you know in all de lan'.  
But dey's somep'n' dearah to me,  
Somep'n' faihah to my eyes  
In dat cabin, less you bring me  
To yo' mansion in de skies.

I kin see de light a-shinin'  
Thoo de chinks atween de log  
I kin hyeah de way-off bayin'  
Of my mastah's huntin' dogs,  
An' de neighin' of de hosses  
Stampin' on de ol' bahn flo',  
But above dese soun's de laughin'  
At my deah ol' cabin do'.

We would gethah daih at evenin'  
All my frien's 'ud come erroun'  
An' hit wan't no time, twell, ble  
you,  
You could hyeah de banjo  
soun'.

You could see de dahkies dancin'  
Pigeon wing an' heel an' toe —

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Joyous times I tell you people  
Roun' dat same ol' cabin do'.  
But at times my t'oughts gits sad-  
dah,  
Ez I riccolec' de folks,  
An' dey frolickin' an' talkin'  
Wid dey laughin' an' dey jokes.  
An' hit hu'ts me w'en I membahs  
Dat I'll nevah see no mo'  
Dem ah faces gethered smilin'  
Roun' dat po' ol' cabin do'.

### DESPAIR

LET me close the eyes of my soul  
That I may not see  
What stands between thee and me.  
Let me shut the ears of my heart  
That I may not hear  
A voice that drowns yours, my  
dear.

Let me cut the cords of my life,  
Of my desolate being,  
Since cursed is my hearing and see-  
ing.

### CIRCUMSTANCES ALTER CASES

TIM Murphy's gon' walkin' wid  
Maggie O'Neill,  
O chone!

If I was her muther, I'd frown  
on sich foolin',  
O chone!

I'm sure it's unmutherlike, darin'  
an' wrong  
To let a gyrul hear tell the sass an'  
the song  
Of every young felly that happens  
along,  
O chone!

An' Murphy, the things that's  
be'n sed of his doin',  
O chone!  
'Tis a cud that no dacent folks  
wants to be chewin',  
O chone!

If he came to my door wid his  
cane on a twirl,  
Fur to thry to make love to you,  
Biddy, my girl,  
Ah, wouldn't I send him away  
wid a whirl,  
O chone!

They say the gossoon is indecent  
and dirty,  
O chone!  
In spite of his dressin' so.  
O chone!

Let him dress up ez foine ez a  
king or a queen,  
Let him put on more wrinkles  
than ever was seen,  
You'll be sure he's no match for  
my little colleen,  
O chone!

Faith the two is comin' back an'  
their walk is all over,  
O chone!



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

'Twas a pretty short walk fur to  
take wid a lover,

O chone!

Why, I believe that Tim Mur-  
phy's a kumin' this way,

Ah, Biddy jest look at him steppin'  
so gay,

I'd niver belave what the gos-  
sipers say,

O chone!

He's turned in the gate an' he's  
coming a-caperin',

O chone!

Go, Biddy, go quick an' put on a  
ciane apern,

O chone!

Be quick as ye kin fur he's right at  
the dure;

Come in, master Tim, fur ye're  
welcome I'm shure.

We were talkin' o' ye jest a minute  
before.

O chone!

### TILL THE WIND GETS RIGHT

OH the breeze is blowin' balmy  
An the sun is in a haze;

There's a cloud jest givin' coolness  
To the laziest of days.

There are crowds upon the lake-  
side,

But the fish refuse to bite,  
So I'll wait and go a-fishin'  
When the wind gets right.

Now my boat tugs at her anchor

Eager now to kiss the spray,

While the little waves are callin'

Drowsy sailor come away,

There's a harbor for the happy,

And its sheen is just in sight,

But I won't set sail to get there,

Till the wind gets right.

That's my trouble, too, I reckon

I've been waitin' all too long,

Tho' the days were always

Still the wind is always wrong

An' when Gabriel blows his trum-  
pet,

In the day o' in the night,

I will still be found waitin',

Till the wind gets right.

### A SUMMER NIGHT

SUMMAH is de lovin' time —

Do' keer what you say.

Night is allus peart an' prime,

Bettah dan de day.

Do de day is sweet an' good,

Birds a-singin' fine,

Pines a-smellin' in de wood,—

But de night is mine.

Rivah whisperin' "howdy do,"

Ez it pass you by —

Moon a-lookin' down at you,

Winkin' on de sly.

Frogs a-croakin' f'om de pon',

Singin' bass dey fill,

An' you listen way beyon'

Ol' man whippo'will.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Hush up, honey, tek my han',  
Mek yo' footsteps light;  
Somep'n' kin' o' hol's de lan'  
On a summah night.  
Somep'n' dat you nevah sees  
An' you nevah hyeahs,  
But you feels it in de breeze,  
Somep'n' nigh to teahs.

Somep'n' nigh to teahs? dat's so;  
But hit's nigh to smiles.  
An' you feels it ez you go  
Down de shinin' miles.  
Tek my han', my little dove;  
Hush an' come erway —  
Summah is de time fu' love,  
Night-time beats de day!

### AT SUNSET TIME

ADOWN the west a golden glow  
Sinks burning in the sea,  
And all the dreams of long ago  
Come flooding back to me.  
The past has writ a story strange  
Upon my aching heart,  
But time has wrought a subtle  
change,  
My wounds have ceased to  
smart.

No more the quick delight of  
youth,  
No more the sudden pain,  
I look no more for trust or truth  
Where greed may compass gain.

What, was it I who bared my  
heart  
Through unrelenting years,  
And knew the sting of misery's  
dart,  
The tang of sorrow's tears?

'Tis better now, I do not weep,  
I do not laugh nor care;  
My soul and spirit half asleep  
Drift aimless everywhere.  
We float upon a sluggish stream,  
We ride no rapids mad,  
While life is all a tempered dream  
And every joy half sad.

### NIGHT

SILENCE, and whirling worlds afar  
Through all encircling skies.  
What floods come o'er the spirit's  
bar,  
What wondrous thoughts arise.

The earth, a mantle falls away,  
And, winged, we leave the sod;  
Where shines in its eternal sway  
The majesty of God.

### AT LOAFING-HOLT

SINCE I left the city's heat  
For this sylvan, cool retreat,  
High upon the hill-side here  
Where the air is clean and clear,  
I have lost the urban ways.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Mine are calm and tranquil days,  
Sloping lawns of green are mine,  
Clustered treasures of the vine;  
Long forgotten plants I know,  
Where the best wild berries grow,  
Where the greens and grasses  
sprout,

When the elders blossom out.  
Now I am grown weather-wise  
With the lore of winds and skies.  
Mine the song whose soft refrain  
Is the sigh of summer rain.

Seek you where the woods are cool,  
Would you know the shady pool  
Where, throughout the lazy day,  
Speckled beauties drowse or play?

Would you find in rest or peace  
Sorrow's permanent release?—

Leave the city, grim and gray,  
Come with me, ah, come away.

Do you fear the winter chill,  
Deepes of snow upon the hill?

'Tis a mantle, kind and warm,  
Shielding tender shoots from harm.  
Do you dread the ice-clad  
streams,—

They are mirrors for your dreams.  
Here's a rouse, when summer's  
past

To the raging winter's blast.  
Let him roar and let him rout,  
We are armored for the bout.  
How the logs are glowing, see!  
Who sings louder, they or he?  
Could the city be more gay?  
Burn your bridges! Come away!

### WHEN A FELLER'S ITCHIN' TO BE SPANKED

W'EN us fellers stomp around,  
makin' lots o' noise,

Gramma says, "There's certain  
times come to little boys

W'en they need a shingle or the  
soft side of a plank;"

She says "we're a-itchin' for a  
right good spank."

An' she says, "Now thes you  
wait,

It's a-comin'—soon or late,  
W'en a feller's itchin' fer a spank."

W'en a feller's out o' school, you  
know how he feels,

Gramma says we wriggle 'roun'  
like a lot o' eels.

W'y it's like a man that's thes  
home from out o' jail.

What's the use o' scoldin' if we  
pull Tray's tail?

Gramma says, tho', "Thes you  
wait,

It's a-comin'—soon or late,  
You'se the boys that's itchin' to  
be spanked."

Cats is funny creatures an' I like  
to make 'em yowl,

Gramma alwus looks at me with  
a awful scowl

An' she says, "Young gentlemen,  
mamma should be thanked

Ef you'd get your knickerbockers  
right well spanked."

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

An' she says, "Now thes you  
wait,

It's a-comin'—soon or late,"

W'en a feller's itchin' to be  
spanked.

Ef you fin' the days is gettin'  
awful hot in school

An' you know a swimmin' place  
where it's nice and cool,

Er you know a cat-fish hole brim-  
min' full o' fish,

Whose a-goin' to set around school  
and wish?

'Tain't no use to hide your bait,

It's a-comin,—soon or late,

W'en a feller's itchin' to be  
spanked.

Ol' folks know most ever'thing  
'bout the world, I guess,

Gramma does, we wish she knowed  
thes a little less,

But I alwus kind o' think it 'ud be  
as well

Ef they wouldn't alwus have to  
up an' tell;

We kids wish 'at they'd thes  
wait,

It's a-comin'—soon or late,

W'en a feller's itchin' to be  
spanked.

### THE RIVER OF RUIN

ALONG by the river of ruin

They dally — the thoughtless ones,

They dance and they dream

By the side of the stream,  
As long as the river runs.

It seems all so pleasant and  
cheery —

No thought of the morrow is  
theirs,

And their faces are bright

With the sun of delight,

And they dream of no night-  
brooding cares.

The women wear garlanded  
tresses,

The men have rings on their  
hands,

And they sing in their glee,

For they think they are free —

They that know not the treacher-  
ous sands.

Ah, but this be a venturesome jour-  
ney,

Forever those sands are ashift,

And a step to one side

Means a grasp of the tide,

And the current is fearful and  
swift.

For once in the river of ruin,

What boots it, to do or to dare,

For down we must go

In the turbulent flow,

To the desolate sea of Despair.

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

## TO HER

YOUR presence like a benison to  
me

Wakes my sick soul to dreamful  
ecstasy,

I fancy that some old Arabian  
night

Saw you my houri and my heart's  
delight.

And wandering forth beneath the  
passionate moon,

Your love-strung zither and my  
soul in tune,

We knew the joy, the haunting of  
the pain

That like a flame thrills  
through me now again.

To-night we sit where sweet the  
spice winds blow,

A wind the northland lacks and  
ne'er shall know,

With clasped hands and spirits all  
aglow

As in Arabia in the long ago.

## A LOVE LETTER

OH, I des received a letter f'om de  
sweetest little gal;

Oh, my; oh, my.

She's my lovely little sweetheart  
an' her name is Sal:

Oh, my; oh, my.

She writes me dat she loves me an'  
she loves me true,

She wonders ef I'll tell huh dat  
I loves huh, too;

An' my heaht's so full o' music dat  
I do' know what to do;

Oh, my; oh, my.

I got a man to read it an' he read  
it fine;

Oh, my; oh, my.

Dey ain' no use denying dat her  
love is mine;

Oh, my; oh, my.

But hyeah's de t'ing dat's puttin'  
me in such a awful plight,

I t'ink of huh at mornin' an' I  
dream of huh at night;

But how's I gwine to cou't huh  
w'en I do' know how to  
write?

Oh, my; oh, my.

My heaht is bubblin' ovah wid de  
t'ings I want to say;

Oh, my; oh, my.

An' dey's lots of folks to copy  
what I tell 'em fu' de pay;

Oh, my; oh, my.

But dey's t'ings dat I's a-t'inkin'  
dat is only fu' huh ears,

An' I couldn't lu'n to write 'em ef  
I took a dozen years;

So to go down daih an' tell huh  
is de only way, it 'pears;

Oh, my; oh, my.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

### AFTER MANY DAYS

I'VE always been a faithful man  
An' tried to live for duty,  
But the stringent mode of life  
Has somewhat lost its beauty.

The story of the generous bread  
He sent upon the waters,  
Which after many days returns  
To trusting sons and daughters,

Had oft impressed me, so I want  
My soul influenced by it,  
And bought a loaf of bread and  
sought  
A stream where I could try it.

I cast my bread upon the waves  
And fancied then to await it;  
It had not floated far away  
When a fish came up and ate it.

And if I want both fish and bread,  
And surely both I'm wanting,  
About the only way I see  
Is for me to go fishing.

### LIZA MAY

Little brown face full of smiles,  
And a baby's guileless wiles,  
Liza May, Liza May.

Eyes a-peeping thro' the fence  
With an interest intense,  
Liza May.

Ah, the gate is just ajar,  
And the meadow is not far,  
Liza May, Liza May.

And the road feels very sweet,  
To your little toddling feet,  
Liza May.

Ah, you roguish runaway,  
What will toiling mother say,  
Liza May, Liza May?

What care you who smile to greet  
Everyone you chance to meet,  
Liza May?

Soft the mill-race sings its song,  
Just a little way along,  
Liza May, Liza May.

But the song is full of guile,  
Turn, ah turn, your steps the  
while,  
Liza May.

You have caught the gleam and  
glow  
Where the darkling waters flow,  
Liza May, Liza May.

Flash of ripple, bend of bough,  
Where are all the angels now?  
Liza May.

Now a mother's eyes intense  
Gazing o'er a shabby fence,  
Liza May, Liza May.

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Then a mother's anguished face  
Peering all around the place,  
Liza May.

Hear the agonizing call  
For a mother's all in all,  
Liza May, Liza May.

Hear a mother's maddened prayer  
To the calm unanswering air,  
Liza May.

What's become of — Liza May?  
What has darkened all the day?  
Liza May, Liza May.

Ask the waters dark and fleet,  
If they know the smiling, sweet  
Liza May.

Call her, call her as you will,  
On the meadow, on the hill,  
Liza May, Liza May.

Through the brush or beaten track  
Echo only gives you back,  
Liza May.

Ah, but you were loving — sweet,  
On your little toddling feet,  
Liza May, Liza May.

But through all the coming years,  
Must a mother breathe with tears,  
Liza May.

## THE MASTERS

Oh, who is the Lord of the land of  
life,

When hotly goes the fray?  
When, fierce we smile in the midst  
of strife  
Then whom shall we obey?

Oh, Love is the Lord of the land  
of life

Who holds a monarch's sway;  
He wends with wish of maid and  
wife,  
And him you must obey.

Then who is the Lord of the land  
of life,

At setting of the sun?  
Whose word shall sway when  
Peace is rife  
And all the fray is done?

Then Death is the Lord of the  
land of life,

When your hot race is run.  
Meet then his scythe and pruning-  
knife  
When the fray is lost or won.

## TROUBLE IN DE KITCHEN

DEY was oncet a awful quoil  
'twixt de skillet an' de pot;  
De pot was des a-bilin' an' de skil-  
let sho' was hot.

Dey slurred each othah's colah an  
dey called each othah names,



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

W'ile de coal-oil can des gu-gled,  
po'in oil erpon de flames.

De pot, hit called de skillet des a  
flat, disfiggered t'ing,  
An' de skillet 'plied dat all de pot  
could do was set an' sing,  
An' he 'lowed dat dey was 'lusions  
dat he wouldn't stoop to mek  
'Case he reckernize his juty, an' he  
had too much at steak.

Well, at dis de pot biled ovah, case  
his tempah gittin' highah,  
An' de skillet got to sputterin',  
den de fat was in de fiah.  
Mistah fiah lay daih smokin' an'  
a-t'inkin' to hisse'f,  
W'ile de peppah-box us nudgin' of  
de gingah on de she'f.

Den dey all des lef' hit to 'im,  
'bout de trouble an' de talk;  
An' howevah he decided, w'y dey  
bofe 'u'd walk de chalk;  
But de fiah uz so 'sgusted how dey  
quoil an' dey shout  
Dat he cooled 'em off, I reckon,  
w'en he puffed an' des went  
out.

### CHRISTMAS

STEP wid de banjo an' glide wid  
de fiddle,  
Dis ain' no time fu' to pottah  
an' piddle;

Fu' Christmas is comin', it's right  
on de way,  
An' dey's houahs to dance 'fo'  
de break o' de day.

What if de win' is taihin' an'  
whistlin'?

Look at dat fiah how hit's  
spittin' an' bristlin'!  
Heat in de ashes an' heat in de  
cindahs,  
Ol' mistah Fros' kin des look  
thoo de windahs.

Heat up de toddy an' pas' de wa'm  
glasses,

Don' stop to shivah at blowin's  
an' blas'es,  
Keep on de kittle an' keep it a-  
hummin',

Eat all an' drink all, dey's lots  
mo' a-comin'.  
Look hyeah, Maria, don't open  
dat oven,  
Want all dese people a-pushin'  
an' shovin'?

Res' f'om de dance? Yes, you  
done cotch dat odah,  
Mammy done cotch it, an' law!  
hit nigh flo'd huh;  
'Possum is monst'ous fu' mekin'  
folks fin' it!

Come, draw yo' cheers up, I's  
sho' I do' min' it.  
Eat up dem critters, you men folks  
an' wimmens,  
'Possums ain' skace w'en dey's  
lots o' pu'simmons.

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

## ROSES AND PEARLS

YOUR spoken words are roses fine  
and sweet,  
The songs you sing are perfect  
pearls of sound.  
How lavish nature is about your  
feet,  
To scatter flowers and jewels both  
around.

Blushing the stream of petal beauty  
flows,  
Softly the white strings trickle  
down and shine.  
Oh! speak to me, my love, I crave  
a rose.  
Sing me a song, for I would pearls  
were mine.

## RAIN-SONGS

THE rain streams down like harp-  
strings from the sky;  
The wind, that world-old  
harpist sitteth by;  
And ever as he sings his low re-  
frain,  
He plays upon the harp-strings  
of the rain.

## A LOST DREAM

AH, I have changed, I do not  
know  
Why lonely hours affect me so.

In days of yore, this were not wont,  
No loneliness my soul could daunt.

For me too serious for my age,  
The weighty tome of hoary sage,  
Until with puzzled heart astir,  
One God-giv'n night, I dreamed  
of her.

I loved no woman, hardly knew  
More of the sex that strong men  
woo  
Than cloistered monk within his  
cell;  
But now the dream is lost, and hell  
Holds me her captive tight and  
fast  
Who prays and struggles for the  
past.  
No living maid has charmed my  
eyes,  
But now, my soul is wonder-wise.

For I have dreamed of her and  
seen  
Her red-brown tresses' ruddy  
sheen,  
Have known her sweetness, lip to  
lip,  
The joy of her companionship.

When days were bleak and winds  
were rude,  
She shared my smiling solitude,  
And all the bare hills walked with  
me  
To hearken winter's melody.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

And when the spring came o'er the  
land  
We fared together hand in hand  
Beneath the linden's leafy screen  
That waved above us faintly  
green.

In summer, by the river-side,  
Our souls were kindred with the  
tide  
That floated onward to the sea  
As we swept toward Eternity.

The bird's call and the water's  
drone  
Were all for us and us alone.  
The water-fall that sang all night  
Was her companion, my delight,

And e'en the squirrel, as he sped  
Along the branches overhead,  
Half kindly and half envious,  
Would chatter at the joy of us.

'Twas but a dream, her face, her  
hair,  
The spring-time sweet, the winter  
bare,  
The summer when the woods we  
ranged,—  
'Twas but a dream, but all is  
changed.

Yes, all is changed and all has  
fled,  
The dream is broken, shattered,  
dead.  
And yet, sometimes, I pray to know  
How just a dream could hold me  
so.

### A SONG

THOU art the soul of a summer's  
day,  
Thou art the breath of the rose.  
But the summer is fled  
And the rose is dead  
Where are they gone, who knows,  
who knows?

Thou art the blood of my heart o'  
hearts,  
Thou art my soul's repose,  
But my heart grows numb  
And my soul is dumb  
Where art thou, love, who knows,  
who knows?

Thou art the hope of my after  
years —  
Sun for my winter snows  
But the years go by  
'Neath a clouded sky.  
Where shall we meet, who knows,  
who knows?



**MISCELLANEOUS**



## THE CAPTURE

DUCK come switchin' 'cross de lot

Hi, oh, Miss Lady!

Hurry up an' hide de pot

Hi, oh, Miss Lady!

Duck's a mighty 'spicious fowl,

Slick as snake an' wise as owl;

Hol' dat dog, don't let him yowl!

Hi, oh, Miss Lady!

Th'ow dat co'n out kind o' slow

Hi, oh, Miss Lady!

Keep yo'se'f behin' de do'

Hi, oh, Miss Lady!

Lots o' food'll kill his feah,

Co'n is cheap but fowls is deah —

"Come, good ducky, come on  
heah."

Hi, oh, Miss Lady!

Ain't he fat and ain't he fine,

Hi, oh, Miss Lady!

Des can't wait to make him  
mine.

Hi, oh, Miss Lady!

See him waddle when he walk,

'Sh! keep still and don't you talk!

Got you! Don't you daih to  
squawk!

Hi, oh, Miss Lady!

## WHEN WINTER DARKEN- ING ALL AROUND

WHEN winter covering all the  
ground

Hides every sign of Spring, sir.

However you may look around,

Pray what will then you sing,  
sir?

The Spring was here last year I  
know,

And many bards did flute, sir;

I shall not fear a little snow

Forbid me from my lute, sir.

If words grow dull and rhymes  
grow rare,

I'll sing of Spring's farewell, sir.

For every season steals an air,

Which has a Springtime smell,  
sir.

But if upon the other side,

With passionate longing burn-  
ing,

Will seek the half unjeweled tide,

And sing of Spring's returning.

## FROM THE PORCH AT RUNNYMEDE

I STAND above the city's rush and  
din,

And gaze far down with calm  
and undimmed eyes,



## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

To where the misty smoke wreath  
    grey and dim  
Above the myriad roofs and  
    spires rise;

Still is my heart and vacant is my  
    breath —

    This lovely view is breath and  
    life to me,

Why I could charm the icy soul  
    of death

    With such a sight as this I stand  
    and see.

I hear no sound of labor's din or  
    stir,

    I feel no weight of worldly  
    cares or fears,

Sweet song of birds, of wings the  
    soothing whirr,

    These sounds alone assail my  
    listening ears.

Unwhipt of conscience here I  
    stand alone,

    The breezes humbly kiss my gar-  
    ment's hem;

I am a king — the whole world is  
    my throne,

    The blue grey sky my royal  
    diadem.

Such chances, such abilities,

    To see the end was not for my  
    poor eyes,

Thine was the impulse, thine the  
    forming thought.

Ah, I have wrought,

    And these sad hands have right  
    to tell their story,

It was no hard up striving after  
    glory,

    Catching and losing, gaining  
    and failing,

Raging me back at the world's  
    raucous railing,

    Simply and humbly from stone  
    and from wood,

Wrought I the things that to thee  
    might seem good.

If they are little, ah God! but the  
    cost,

    Who but thou knowest the all  
    that is lost!

If they are few, is the workman-  
    ship true?

    Try them and weigh me, what-  
    e'er be my due!

## EVENING

### EQUIPMENT

WITH what thou gavest me, O  
    Master,

    I have wrought.

THE moon begins her stately ride  
    Across the summer sky;

The happy wavelets lash the  
    shore,—

    The tide is rising high.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Beneath some friendly blade of  
grass

The lazy beetle cowers;  
The coffers of the air are filled  
With offerings from the flow-  
ers.

And slowly buzzing o'er my head  
A swallow wings her flight;  
I hear the weary plowman sing  
As falls the restful night.

### TO PFRIMMER

(Lines on reading "Driftwood.")

DRIFTWOOD gathered here and  
there

Along the beach of time;  
Now and then a chip of truth  
'Mid boards and boughs of rhyme;  
Driftwood gathered day by day,—  
The cypress and the oak,—  
Twigs that in some former time  
From sturdy home trees broke.  
Did this wood come floating thick  
All along down "Injin Crik?"  
Or did kind tides bring it thee  
From the past's receding sea  
Down the stream of memory?

### TO THE MIAMI

Kiss me, Miami, thou most con-  
stant one!

I love thee more for that thou  
changest not.

When Winter comes with frigid  
blast,

Or when the blithesome Spring  
is past

And Summer's here with sun-  
shine hot,

Or in sere Autumn, thou has  
still the pow'r

To charm alike, whate'er the hour.

Kiss me, Miami, with thy dewy  
lips;

Throbs fast my heart e'en as  
thine own breast beats.

My soul doth rise as rise thy  
waves,

As each on each the dark shore  
laves

And breaks in ripples and re-  
treats.

There is a poem in thine every  
phase;

Thou still has sung through all  
thy days.

Tell me, Miami, how it was with  
thee

When years ago Tecumseh in  
his prime

His birch boat o'er thy waters  
sent,

And pitched upon thy banks his  
tent.

In that long-gone, poetic time,  
Did some bronze bard thy flowing  
stream sit by

And sing thy praises, e'en as I?

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Did some bronze lover 'neath this  
dark old tree

Whisper of love unto his Indian  
maid?

And didst thou list his murmurs  
deep,

And in thy bosom safely keep

The many raging vows they  
said?

Or didst thou tell to fish and frog  
and bird

The raptured scenes that there  
occurred?

But, O dear stream, what volumes  
thou couldst tell

To all who know thy language  
as I do,

Of life and love and jealous hate!

But now to tattle were too late,—

Thou who hast ever been so  
true.

Tell not to every passing idler  
here

All those sweet tales that reached  
thine ear.

But, silent stream, speak out and  
tell me this:

I say that men and things are  
still the same;

Were men as bold to do and dare?

Were women then as true and  
fair?

Did poets seek celestial flame,  
The hero die to gain a laureled  
brow,

And women suffer, then as now?

## CHRISTMAS CAROL

RING out, ye bells!

All Nature swells

With gladness at the wondrous  
story,—

The world was lorn,

But Christ is born

To change our sadness into glory.

Sing, earthlings, sing!

To-night a King

Hath come from heaven's high  
throne to bless us.

The outstretched hand

O'er all the land

Is raised in pity to caress us.

Come at his call;

Be joyful all;

Away with mourning and with  
sadness!

The heavenly choir

With holy fire

Their voices raise in songs of glad-  
ness.

The darkness breaks

And Dawn awakes,

Her cheeks suffused with youthful  
blushes.

The rocks and stones

In holy tones

Are singing sweeter than the  
thrushes.

Then why should we

In silence be,

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

When Nature lends her voice to  
praises;

When heaven and earth  
Proclaim the truth

Of Him for whom that lone star  
blazes?

No, be not still,  
But with a will

Strike all your harps and set them  
ringing;

On hill and heath  
Let every breath

Throw all its power into singing!

### A SUMMER PASTORAL

It's hot to-day. The bees is  
buzzin'

Kinder don't-keer-like aroun'

An' fur off the warm air dances  
O'er the parchin' roofs in town.

In the brook the cows is standin';

Childern hidin' in the hay;

Can't keep none of 'em a workin',  
'Cause it's hot to-day.

It's hot to-day. The sun is  
blazin'

Like a great big ball o' fire;

Seems as ef instead o' settin'

It keeps mountin' higher an'  
higher.

I'm as triflin' as the children,

Though I blame them lots an'  
scold;

I keep slippin' to the spring-house,  
Where the milk is rich an' cold.

The very air within its shadder  
Smells o' cool an' restful things,

An' a roguish little robin

Sits above the place an' sings.

I don't mean to be a shirkin',

But I linger by the way

Longer, mebbe, than is needful,

'Cause it's hot to-day.

It's hot to-day. The horses stum-  
ble

Half asleep across the fiel's;

An' a host o' teasin' fancies

O'er my burnin' senses steals,—

Dreams o' cool rooms, curtains  
lowered,

An' a sofy's temptin' look;

Patter o' composin' raindrops

Or the ripple of a brook.

I strike a stump! That wakes  
me sudden;

Dreams all vanish into air.

Lordy! how I chew my whiskers;

'Twouldn't do fur me to swear.

But I have to be so keerful

'Bout my thoughts an' what I  
say;

Somethin' might slip out unheeded,

'Cause it's hot to-day.

Git up, there, Suke! you, Sal, git  
over!

Sakes alive! how I do sweat.

Every stitch that I've got on me,

Bet a cent, is wringin' wet.

If this keeps up, I'll lose my tem-  
per.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Gee there, Sal, you lazy brute!  
Wonder who on airth this weather  
Could 'a' be'n got up to suit?

You, Sam, go bring a tin o' water;  
Dash it all, don't be so slow!  
'Pears as ef you tuk an hour  
'Tween each step to stop an'  
blow.

Think I want to stand a meltin'  
Out here in this b'ilin' sun,  
While you stop to think about it?  
Lift them feet o' your'n an' run.

It ain't no use; I'm plumb fe-  
taggled.

Come an' put this team away.  
I won't plow another furrer;  
It's too mortal hot to-day.  
I ain't weak, nor I ain't lazy,  
But I'll stand this half day's loss  
'Fore I let the devil make me  
Lose my patience an' git cross.

### IN SUMMER TIME

WHEN summer time has come,  
and all  
The world is in the magic thrall  
Of perfumed airs that lull each  
sense  
To fits of drowsy indolence;  
When skies are deepest blue above,  
And flow'rs aflush,—then most I  
love  
To start, while early dews are  
damp,

And wend my way in woodland  
tramp

Where forests rustle, tree on tree,  
And sing their silent songs to me;  
Where pathways meet and path  
ways part,—

To walk with Nature heart by  
heart,

Till wearied out at last I lie  
Where some sweet stream steals  
singing by

A mossy bank; where violets vie  
In color with the summer sky,—  
Or take my rod and line and hook,  
And wander to some darkling  
brook,

Where all day long the willows  
dream,

And idly droop to kiss the stream,  
And there to loll from morn till  
night—

Unheeding nibble, run, or bite—  
Just for the joy of being there  
And drinking in the summer air,  
The summer sounds, and summer  
sights,

That set a restless mind to rights  
When grief and pain and raging  
doubt

Of men and creeds have worn it  
out;

The birds' song and the water's  
drone,

The humming bees' low monotone,  
The murmur of the passing breeze,  
And all the sounds akin to these,  
That make a man in summer time

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Feel only fit for rest and rhyme.  
Joy springs all radiant in my  
breast;

Though pauper poor, than king  
more blest,

The tide beats in my soul so strong  
That happiness breaks forth in  
song,

And rings aloud the welkin blue  
With all the songs I ever knew.

O time of rapture! time of song!  
How swiftly glide thy days along  
Adown the current of the years,  
Above the rocks of grief and tears!  
'Tis wealth enough of joy for me  
In summer time to simply be

### A THANKSGIVING POEM

THE sun hath shed its kindly  
light,

Our harvesting is gladly o'er  
Our fields have felt no killing  
blight,

Our bins are filled with goodly  
store.

From pestilence, fire, flood, and  
sword

We have been spared by thy de-  
cree,

And now with humble hearts, O  
Lord,

We come to pay our thanks to  
thee.

We feel that had our merits been  
The measure of thy gifts to us,

We erring children, born of sin,  
Might not now be rejoicing  
thus.

No deed of ours hath brought us  
grace;

When thou were nigh our sight  
was dull,

We hid in trembling from thy  
face,

But thou, O God, wert merci-  
ful.

Thy mighty hand o'er all the land  
Hath still been open to bestow  
Those blessings which our wants  
demand

From heaven, whence all bless-  
ings flow.

Thou hast, with ever watchful eye,  
Looked down on us with holy  
care,

And from thy storehouse in the  
sky

Hast scattered plenty every-  
where.

Then lift we up our songs of  
praise

To thee, O Father, good and  
kind;

To thee we consecrate our days;  
Be thine the temple of each  
mind.

With incense sweet our thanks  
ascend;

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Before thy works our powers  
pall;  
Though we should strive years  
without end,  
We could not thank thee for  
them all.

### NUTTING SONG

THE November sun invites me,  
And although the chill wind smites  
me,  
I will wander to the woodland  
Where the laden trees await;  
And with loud and joyful singing  
I will set the forest ringing,  
As if I were king of Autumn,  
And Dame Nature were my  
mate,—

While the squirrel in his gambols  
Fearless round about me ambles,  
As if he were bent on showing  
In my kingdom he'd a share;  
While my warm blood leaps and  
dashes,  
And my eye with freedom flashes,  
As my soul drinks deep and deeper  
Of the magic in the air.

There's a pleasure found in nut-  
ting,  
All life's cares and griefs outshut-  
ting,  
That is fuller far and better  
Than what prouder sports im-  
part.

Who could help a carol trilling  
As he sees the baskets filling?  
Why, the flow of song keeps run-  
ning  
O'er the high walls of the heart.

So when I am home returning,  
When the sun is lowly burning,  
I will once more wake the echoes  
With a happy song of praise,—  
For the golden sunlight blessing,  
And the breezes' soft caressing,  
And the precious boon of living  
In the sweet November days.

### LOVE'S PICTURES

LIKE the blush upon the rose  
When the wooing south wind  
speaks,  
Kissing soft its petals,  
Are thy cheeks.

Tender, soft, beseeching, true,  
Like the stars that deck the skies  
Through the ether sparkling,  
Are thine eyes.

Like the song of happy birds,  
When the woods with spring re-  
joice,  
In their blithe awak'ning,  
Is thy voice.

Like soft threads of clustered silk  
O'er thy face so pure and fair,  
Sweet in its profusion,  
Is thy hair.



## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Like a fair but fragile vase,  
Triumph of the carver's art,  
Graceful formed and slender,—  
Thus thou art.

Ah, thy cheek, thine eyes, thy  
voice,  
And thy hair's delightful wave  
Make me, I'll confess it,  
Thy poor slave!

### THE OLD HOMESTEAD

'Tis an old deserted homestead  
On the outskirts of the town,  
Where the roof is all moss-cov-  
ered,  
And the walls are tumbling  
down;  
But around that little cottage  
Do my brightest mem'ries cling,  
For 'twas there I spent the mo-  
ments  
Of my youth,—life's happy  
spring.

I remember how I used to  
Swing upon the old front gate,  
While the robin in the tree tops  
Sung a night song to his mate;  
And how later in the evening,  
As the beaux were wont to do,  
Mr. Perkins, in the parlor,  
Sat and sparked my sister Sue.

There my mother — heaven bless  
her! —

Kissed or spanked as was our  
need,  
And by smile or stroke implanted  
In our hearts fair virtue's seed;  
While my father, man of wisdom,  
Lawyer keen, and farmer stout,  
Argued long with neighbor Dob-  
bins  
How the corn crops would turn  
out.

Then the quiltings and the  
dances —

How my feet were wont to fly,  
While the moon peeped through  
the barn chinks  
From her stately place on high.  
Oh, those days, so sweet, so happy,  
Ever backward o'er me roll;  
Still the music of that farm life  
Rings an echo in my soul.

Now the old place is deserted,  
And the walls are falling down;  
All who made the home life cheer-  
ful,

Now have died or moved to  
town.  
But about that dear old cottage  
Shall my mem'ries ever cling,  
For 'twas there I spent the mo-  
ments  
Of my youth,—life's happy  
spring.

# THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

## ON THE DEATH OF W. C.

THOU arrant robber, Death!  
Couldst thou not find  
Some lesser one than he  
To rob of breath,—  
Some poorer mind  
Thy prey to be?

His mind was like the sky,—  
As pure and free;  
His heart was broad and open  
As the sea.  
His soul shone purely through his  
face,  
And Love made him her dwelling  
place.

Not less the scholar than the  
friend,  
Not less a friend than man;  
The manly life did shorter end  
Because so broad it ran.

Weep not for him, unhappy Muse!  
His merits found a grander use  
Some other-where. God wisely  
sees  
The place that needs his qualities.  
Weep not for him, for when Death  
lowers  
O'er youth's ambrosia-scented bow-  
ers  
He only plucks the choicest flow-  
ers.

## AN OLD MEMORY

How sweet the music sounded  
That summer long ago,  
When you were by my side, love,  
To list its gentle flow.

I saw your eyes a-shining,  
I felt your rippling hair,  
I kissed your pearly cheek, love,  
And had no thought of care.

And gay or sad the music,  
With subtle charm replete;  
I found in after years, love  
'Twas you that made it sweet

For standing where we heard it,  
I hear again the strain;  
It wakes my heart, but thrills i  
With sad, mysterious pain.

It pulses not so joyous  
As when you stood with me,  
And hand in hand we listened  
To that low melody.

Oh, could the years turn back  
love!  
Oh, could events be changed  
To what they were that time, love  
Before we were estranged;

Wert thou once more a maiden  
Whose smile was gold to me  
Were I once more the lover  
Whose word was life to thee,—

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

O God! could all be altered,  
The pain, the grief, the strife,  
And wert thou — as thou shouldst  
be —

My true and loyal wife!

But all my tears are idle,  
And all my wishes vain.  
What once you were to me, love,  
You may not be again.

For I, alas! like others,  
Have missed my dearest aim.  
I asked for love. Oh, mockery!  
Fate comes to me with fame!

### A CAREER

“BREAK me my bounds, and let  
me fly  
To regions vast of boundless sky;  
Nor I, like piteous Daphne, be  
Root-bound. Ah, no! I would  
be free

As yon same bird that in its flight  
Outstrips the range of mortal  
sight;

Free as the mountain streams that  
gush  
From bubbling springs, and down-  
ward rush  
Across the serrate mountain's  
side,—

The rocks o'erwhelmed, their  
banks defied,—

And like the passions in the soul,  
Swell into torrents as they roll.

Oh, circumscribe me not by rules  
That serve to lead the minds of  
fools!

But give me pow'r to work my  
will,

And at my deeds the world shall  
thrill.

My words shall rouse the slumb'r-  
ing zest

That hardly stirs in manhood's  
breast;

And as the sun feeds lesser lights,  
As planets have their satellites,

So round about me will I bind  
The men who prize a master  
mind!”

He lived a silent life alone,  
And laid him down when it was  
done;

And at his head was placed a  
stone

On which was carved a name un-  
known!

### ON THE RIVER

THE sun is low,  
The waters flow,  
My boat is dancing to and fro.  
The eve is still,  
Yet from the hill  
The killdeer echoes loud and shrill.

The paddles plash,  
The wavelets dash,  
We see the summer lightning flash;

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

While now and then,  
In marsh and fen  
Too muddy for the feet of men,

Where neither bird  
Nor beast has stirred,  
The spotted bullfrog's croak is  
heard.  
The wind is high,  
The grasses sigh,  
The sluggish stream goes sobbing  
by.

And far away  
The dying day  
Has cast its last effulgent ray;  
While on the land  
The shadows stand  
Proclaiming that the eve's at hand.

### POOR WITHERED ROSE

#### *A Song*

Poor withered rose, she gave it me,  
Half in revenge and half in glee;  
Its petals not so pink by half  
As are her lips when curled to  
laugh,  
As are her cheeks when dimples  
gay  
In merry mischief o'er them play.

#### *Chorus*

Forgive, forgive, it seems un-  
kind  
To cast thy petals to the  
wind;

But it is right, and lest I err  
So scatter I all thought of her.

Poor withered rose, so like my  
heart,  
That wilts at sorrow's cruel dart.  
Who hath not felt the winter's  
blight  
When every hope seemed warm  
and bright?  
Who doth not know love unre-  
turned,  
E'en when the heart most wildly  
burned?

Poor withered rose, thou liest  
dead;  
Too soon thy beauty's bloom hath  
fled.  
'Tis not without a tearful ruth  
I watch decay thy blushing routh;  
And though thy life goes out in  
dole,  
Thy perfume lingers in my soul.

### WORN OUT

You bid me hold my peace  
And dry my fruitless tears,  
Forgetting that I bear  
A pain beyond my years.

You say that I should smile  
And drive the gloom away;  
I would, but sun and smiles  
Have left my life's dark day.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

All time seems cold and void,  
And naught but tears remain;  
Life's music beats for me  
A melancholy strain.

I used at first to hope,  
But hope is past and gone;  
And now without a ray  
My cheerless life drags on.

Like to an ash-stained hearth  
When all its fires are spent;  
Like to an autumn wood  
By storm winds rudely shent,—

So sadly goes my heart,  
Unclothed of hope and peace;  
It asks not joy again,  
But only seeks release.

### JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY (From a Westerner's Point of View.)

No matter what you call it,  
Whether genius, or art,  
He sings the simple songs that  
come

The closest to your heart.  
Fur trim an' skillful phrases,  
I do not keer a jot;  
'Tain't the words alone, but feel-  
in's,

That tech the tender spot.  
An' that's jest why I love him,—  
Why, he's got sech human  
feelin',

An' in ev'ry song he gives us,  
You kin see it creepin', stealin',

Through the core the tears go  
tricklin',  
But the edge is bright an'  
smiley;

I never saw a poet  
Like that poet Whitcomb Riley.

His heart keeps beatin' time with  
our'n

In measures fast or slow;  
He tells us jest the same ol' things  
Our souls have learned to know.

He paints our joys an' sorriers

In a way so stric'ly true,  
That a body can't help knowin'  
That he has felt them too.

If there's a lesson to be taught,  
He never fears to teach it,  
An' he puts the food so good an'  
low

That the humblest one kin reach  
it.

Now in our time, when poets  
rhyme

For money, fun, or fashion,  
'Tis good to hear one voice so clear  
That thrills with honest passion.

So let the others build their songs,  
An' strive to polish highly,—

There's none of them kin tech the  
heart

Like our own Whitcomb Riley.

### A MADRIGAL

DREAM days of fond delight and  
hours

As rosy-hued as dawn, are mine.

## THE COMPLETE POEMS OF

Love's drowsy wine,  
Brewed from the heart of Passion  
flowers,  
Flows softly o'er my lips  
And save thee, all the world is  
in eclipse.

There were no light if thou wert  
not;  
The sun would be too sad to  
shine,  
And all the line  
Of hours from dawn would be a  
blot;  
And Night would haunt the  
skies,  
An unlaid ghost with staring  
dark-ringed eyes.

Oh, love, if thou wert not my love,  
And I perchance not thine—  
what then?  
Could gift of men  
Or favor of the God above,  
Plant aught in this bare heart  
Or teach this tongue the sing-  
er's soulful art?

Ah, no! 'Tis love, and love alone  
That spurs my soul so surely on;  
Turns night to dawn,  
And thorns to roses fairest blown;  
And winter drear to spring—  
Oh, were it not for love I could  
not sing!

### A STARRY NIGHT

A CLOUD fell down from the heav-  
ens,  
And broke on the mountain's  
brow;  
It scattered the dusky fragments  
All over the vale below.

The moon and the stars were anx-  
ious  
To know what its fate might be;  
So they rushed to the azure op'n-  
ing,  
And all peered down to see.

### A LYRIC

My lady love lives far away,  
And oh my heart is sad by day,  
And ah my tears fall fast by night,  
What may I do in such a plight.

Why, miles grow few when love is  
fleet,  
And love, you know, hath flying  
feet;  
Break off thy sighs and witness  
this,  
How poor a thing mere distance is.

My love knows not I love her so,  
And would she scorn me, did she  
know?

How may the tale I would impart  
Attract her ear and storm her  
heart?

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Calm thou the tempest in my  
breast,

Who loves in silence loves the  
best,

But bide thy time, she will awake,  
No night so dark but morn will  
break.

But though my heart so strongly  
yearn,

My lady loves me not in turn,  
How may I win the blest reply  
That my void heart shall satisfy.

Love breedeth love, be thou but  
true,

And soon thy love shall love thee,  
too;

If Fate hath meant you heart for  
heart,

There's naught may keep you  
twain apart.

### HOW SHALL I WOO THEE

How shall I woo thee to win thee,  
mine own?

Say in what tongue shall I tell  
of my love.

I who was fearless so timid have  
grown,

All that was eagle has turned  
into dove.

The path from the meadow that  
leads to the bars

Is more to me now than the path  
of the stars.

How shall I woo thee to win thee,  
mine own,

Thou who art fair and as far as  
the moon?

Had I the strength of the torrent's  
wild tone,

Had I the sweetness of warblers  
in June;

The strength and the sweetness  
might charm and persuade,

But neither have I my petition to  
aid.

How shall I woo thee to win thee,  
mine own?

How shall I traverse the dis-  
tance between

My humble cot and your glorious  
throne?

How shall a clown gain the ear  
of a queen?

Oh teach me the tongue that shall  
please thee the best,

For till I have won thee my heart  
may not rest.







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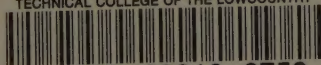
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## POETRY

*Near the close of the last century Paul Laurence Dunbar flashed like a meteor across the literary horizon. On every hand he received the compliment of imitation, and schools, banks and theatres have since been named in his honor. No one else has been able to duplicate his success or to approach his hold on the heart of the people.*

*Benjamin Brawley*

Of all Negro poets, none has been more loved and more widely read than Paul Laurence Dunbar. Here in one volume is contained all his poetry, including the *Lyrics of Lowly Life*, *Lyrics of the Hearthside*, *Lyrics of Love and Laughter*, *Lyrics of Sunshine and Shadow*, and a number of additional poems not appearing in individual volumes. "At Candle-Lightin' Time" is here; also "Accountability," "Compensation," "When Malindy Sings," "Little Brown Baby," and a host of other Dunbar favorites. The volume also includes the famous William Dean Howells' preface on Dunbar which did so much to bring him to the attention of readers everywhere.

Paul Laurence Dunbar was born in Dayton, Ohio, in 1872. He worked as a journalist and on the staff of the Congressional Library and although best known for his poetry, wrote a number of short stories and several novels. He died in 1906.

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